NATION

Protest rally marks 3rd day of Vaishno Devi ropeway strike

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

FPI selling hits ₹ 26,533 crore, outflow intensity eases

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

Battle of GMs: Gukesh faces Liren in C'ship showdown

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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Police try to control the situation amid violence during a second survey of the Jama Masjid, claimed to be originally the site of an ancient Hindu temple, in Sambhal on Sunday **PHOTO: PTI**

UP Mosque survey sparks turmoil, 3 killed

20 cops hurt as protesters torched vehicles, hurled stones; cops use tear gas & batons

SAMBHAL, 24 NOV

Three people were killed and scores of others, including around 20 security personnel, were injured as protesters opposing a court-ordered survey of a Mughal-era mosque here clashed with police on Sunday.

The protesters torched vehicles and pelted stones at the police, who used tear gas and batons to disperse the mob. "Shots were fired by the miscreants... the PRO of the superintendent of police suffered a gunshot to the leg, the police circle officer was hit by pellets and 15 to 20 security personnel were injured in the violence," Moradabad Divisional Commissioner Aunjaneya Kumar Singh said.

He said that a constable also suffered a serious head injury while the deputy collector fractured his leg.

Tension has been brewing in Sambhal since Tuesday when the Jama Masjid was surveyed on the orders of a local court following a petition that claimed that a Harihar temple stood at the site.

Ten people, including two women, have been detained and a probe has been launched, an official said, adding some people even set afire some motorcycles parked on the roadside.

The trouble started on Sunday morning when a large group of people gathered near the mosque and started shouting slogans as the survey team began their work in the Shahi Jama Masjid.

Additional police units have been deployed near the mosque to ensure law and order and officials are closely monitoring the situation.

On Saturday, the Sambhal district administration bound down 34 people on a bond of up to Rs 10 lakh on apprehension of a breach of peace.

Subdivisional Magistrate Vandana Mishra told PTI on Saturday that among the people bound down is Mamlukur Rahman Barq, the father of the Samajwadi Party's Sambhal MP Zia ur Rahman Barq.

Supreme Court lawyer Vishnu Shankar Jain, who is a petitioner in the case, had said the Court of Civil Judge (Senior Division) ordered the constitution of an "Advocate Commission" to survey the mosque.

The court has said that a report should be filed after conducting a videography and photography survey through commission, he said. —*PTI*

Police stand guard during a second survey of the Jama Masjid, claimed to be originally the site of an ancient Hindu temple, in Sambhal **PHOTO: PTI**

BGT Test: Virat & Jaiswal propel India with century

PERTH, 24 NOV

Virat Kohli brought all his technical expertise into play while dealing with vagaries of variable bounce during his 30th hundred after heir apparent Yashasvi Jaiswal's classy 161 put India in sight of a remarkable Test victory against a nervous and fumbling Australia here on Sunday. The Indians dominated the third day to first set an improbable 534-run target for the hosts before reducing them to 12/3 at close of play. Once Kohli reached an unprecedented seventh Test century Down Under, Indian skipper Bumrah declared at 487 for 6 with five overs to go flat out. Jaiswal built a fascinating structure with care and Kohli (100 not out, 143 balls) polished it and put a beautiful coat of paint while throwing caution to wind while reaching landmark. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 8

India exports Pinaka weapon systems to Armenia

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

Amid growing global interest in the indigenous multi barrel rocket launchers (MBRL), India has started the supply of the highly capable Pinaka rockets to Armenia. The supplies of the DRDO-developed rocket launchers have started around the same time India has started deliveries of the Akash air defence missile system to that country. The first lot of the Pinaka multi barrel rocket launcher systems has been supplied to Armenia, defence sources told ANI. The Pinaka rocket launchers are highly capable weapon system with variants which can strike targets over 80 Kms. The contract between Indian firms and Armenia for the supply of these weapons was signed about two years ago after extended negotiations. Armenia is one of three largest buyers of Indian weapons and equipment along with the US and France. —*ANI*

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren handsover his resignation to Governor as he stakes claim to form new government **PHOTO: PTI**

Soren to take oath as J'khand CM on 28 Nov

RANCHI, 24 NOV

JMM leader Hemant Soren on Sunday met Jharkhand Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar and staked claim to form the government, soon after leaders of the INDIA bloc in the state unanimously elected him as the legislature party leader.

He resigned as the chief minister, before staking claim to form the government. He will officiate as the acting chief minister till oath is administered to him on 28 November.

"I met the governor. We staked claim to form the government, and handed over support letter of alliance partners to him. He invited us to form the government. The swearing in ceremony will be held on 28 November," Soren told reporters after meeting Gangwar.

Soren, who drove to the Raj Bhavan in his car, said the governor asked him to officiate as the acting chief minister in the interim.

Soren will be sworn in as the 14th chief minister of Jharkhand, which was carved out of Bihar on 15 November, 2000. —*PTI*

NDA's oath ceremony likely today

Mumbai, 24 Nov

National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is set to hold its oath-taking ceremony in Maharashtra, possibly today, following its significant electoral triumph. Sources suggest the alliance, led by the BJP, is swiftly moving to form the government after securing a decisive mandate in the state assembly elections. BJP and its allies have demonstrated strong organisational capability, emerging victorious in several key constituencies. —*Agencies*

WINTER SESSION FROM TODAY

All party meet: Adani, Manipur in focus

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

In a crucial all-party meeting ahead of Parliament's Winter Session, set to commence on Monday, opposition leaders urged the government to allow discussions on US prosecutors' bribery allegations against the Adani Group as the centre seeks smooth session.

Union Minister Kiren Rijiju emphasised that the agenda for the session would be determined by the respective committees of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

Forty-two leaders from 30 parties attended the meeting, chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. Congress' Deputy Leader in the Lok Sabha, Gaurav Gogoi, described the Adani issue as a scam and pressured the government not to dismiss their demand due to technicalities, asserting that it impacts vital Indian institutions and investors. The Adani Group, led by billionaire Gautam Adani, has denied the allegations of bribing officials to secure lucrative solar power contracts in India.

Additionally, Congress leader Pramod Tiwari stressed that the matter should take precedence over other business due to its implications for the country's economic security.

Gogoi also raised concerns over violence in Manipur, demanding a parliamentary debate on the state's situation. Meanwhile, leaders from Andhra Pradesh's Telugu Desam Party and Jana Sena Party called for clarity on unfulfilled promises from the 2014 state division.

The Winter Session is scheduled to run from 25 November to 20 December, with 16 bills listed for consideration, including the contentious Waqf (Amendment) Bill. Opposition members are pushing for an extension on committee timelines as discussions intensify over legislative priorities. —*PTI*

Congress leaders Jairam Ramesh and Gaurav Gogoi during an all-party meeting ahead of Winter session of Parliament, in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

B'desh seeks to review major energy projects including Adani's

DHAKA, 24 NOV

A review committee formed by Bangladesh's interim government on Sunday recommended engaging an investigation agency to examine power agreements signed by deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's regime with different business groups, including one with India's Adani Group.

"The National Review Committee on Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources has recommended the appointment of a reputed legal and investigation agency to review the major power production agreements signed during the autocratic regime of Sheikh Hasina from 2009 to 2024," an official statement said.

The statement, issued by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus's office, said the committee was currently reviewing seven major energy and power projects, including the Adani (Godda) BIFPCL 1234.4 MW coal-fired plant, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Adani Power Limited.

Six other agreements include one with a Chinese company that built a 1320 MW coal-fired power plant, while the rest are with business groups said to be close to the past regime. —*PTI*

Gautam Adani **PHOTO: PTI**

Fresh plea in SC seeks probe into Adani case

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

A fresh plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking a probe into the indictment of billionaire industrialist Gautam Adani who has been charged in US for alleged bribery and fraud, saying move "unveiled malpractices carried out by conglomerate".

The plea has been filed by advocate Vishal Tiwari. US SEC will have to serve the summons, according to sources. —*PTI*

'TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE'

India rejects $300B climate finance deal

BAKU, 24 NOV

India on Sunday fiercely rejected the paltry USD 300 billion climate finance package for the Global South and said the COP29 presidency and the UN climate change office forced through the deal before allowing it to voice its objections.

Making a strong statement on behalf of India at the closing plenary of the UN climate conference here, Chandni Raina, Adviser, Department of Economic Affairs, termed the adoption process "unfair" and "stage-managed" and said it reflected the troubling lack of trust in the UN system.

Indian delegation representative at UN Chandni Raina **PHOTO: X**

The UN climate conference adopted a new climate finance package of a meagre USD 300 billion annually by 2035, replacing the USD 100 billion pledge made in 2009.

The USD 300 billion figure is a far cry from the USD 1.3 trillion the Global South has been demanding over the past three years of talks to tackle climate change.

India said its request to speak before the adoption of the climate finance package was ignored.

Supporting India, Nigeria said the USD 300 billion climate finance package was a "joke". Malawi and Bolivia also lent support to India.

The USD 1.3 trillion figure is in the document, but it calls on "all actors", including public and private, to "work together" to reach this level by 2035. —*PTI*

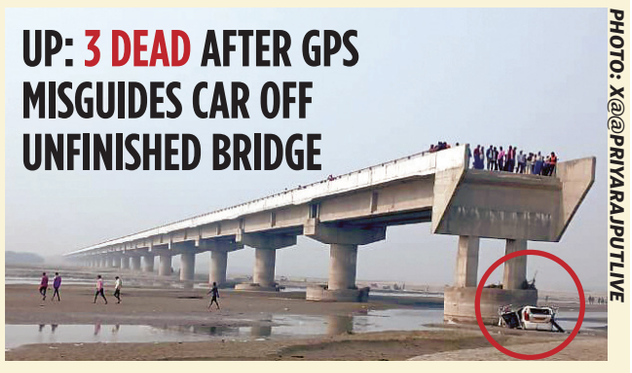


PHOTO: X@@PRIYARAJPUTLIVE

BAREILLY, 24 NOV

Three people died when their car fell into the Ramganga river from a partially constructed bridge here on Sunday, police said, adding that they suspect the driver was misled by its navigation system into taking the unsafe route.

The driver was using a navigation system and did not realise that the bridge was unsafe, driving the car off the damaged section. There were no safety barriers or warning signs on the approach to damaged bridge, leading to accident. —*PTI*

Rally in Mysuru in solidarity with Buddhists

MYSURU, 24 NOV

Former Mysuru mayor said that in solidarity with the Buddhists holding nationwide protests demanding the Union government to transfer management rights of 2500 – year-old Mahabodhi temple at Bodh Gaya, a protest rally will be held in the city on 26 November. Speaking at a press conference, the former mayor stated that the rally will proceed to the new Deputy Commissioner's office after garlanding the Buddha statue in Siddarthanagar. The protest is part of a nationwide movement by Buddhists asserting their rightful claim over the historic temple. During the protest, the protesters will also appeal and file a memorandum to the President, Prime Minister of India, to all state governments through deputy commissioner of Mysuru to protect the religious rights of Buddhists on the same day which will be celebrated as Constitution Day across the nation. —*Salar News*

Trade unions to hold rally in Mysuru on 26 Nov

MYSURU,24 NOV

Members of the district unit of Samyukta Horata Karnataka, a joint committee of trade unions, have announced a public protest rally and convention in Mysuru on 26 November. The event is in solidarity with Samyukta Kisan Morcha to commemorate the fourth anniversary of the farmers' yearlong struggle against the Centre's farm laws. The event aims to raise awareness on farm laws, the APMC Act, the anti-cow slaughter bill, and anti-labour policies, which activists argue undermine the interests of farmers and workers. Jagadeesh Surya, a convener of the event criticised the Union government for amending 48 labour laws into four labour codes, including provisions that extend work hours from eight to twelve. He called these reforms pro-corporate and harmful to workers. —*Salar News*

SDPI convention on 25-26 Nov in Mysuru

MYSURU, 24 NOV

Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) state unit president Abdul Majeed on Sunday said that two-day state representatives and office-bearers convention of SDPI will be held at White Palace convention centre near Manipal Hospital on outer ring road on 25 and 26 November. He said that over 500 representatives from all 31 districts of the state are taking part in the convention. During the two days, the participants will deliberate on strengthening its party base across the state besides recent political developments affecting the interest of minority communities in the state. He also criticised the functioning style of state Waqf board for not preventing the encroachments of its property, besides not initiating measures for its protection. He hit out at BJP leaders for politicising the issue. State Waqf board had issued notices to farmers, other people who have encroached its land, properties as a general procedure. —*Salar News*

Congress win not a clean chit to CM: BJP

MUDA case is in court of law: BJP leader

SRIRANGAPATNA, 24 NOV

The Leader of Opposition R Ashoka on Sunday said the Congress party's victory in the bypolls held for three assembly constituencies is not a clean chit to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah in the MUDA scam.

He said the case is still going on in the court of law.

"MUDA case against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is still in court but he is calling the byelection result itself as a clean chit. Only courts can give clean chit and not the elections," Ashoka said while addressing a gathering in Taggalli in Srirangapatna.

Later, speaking to reporters, Ashoka said results of the bypoll held for three assembly constituencies of Channapatna, Shiggaon and Sandur is a victory of money and not a victory of Congress. The BJP leader said his party's fight will continue against the corruption of the Congress government.

R Ashoka **PHOTO: PTI**

- Later, speaking to reporters, Ashoka said results of the bypoll held for three assembly constituencies of Channapatna, Shiggaon and Sandur is a victory of money and not a victory of Congress

Separately, in a post on social media X, Ashoka said the ruling Congress is under the illusion that they have won three worlds just by winning the by-election by diverting money and winning the votes of one community through appeasement politics.

He took a dig at Siddaramaiah for his statement that the opposition had spread lies with regard to the allegation of "Rs 89 crore embezzlement" in the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribe Development Corporation.

"Didn't you yourself admit in the Karnataka assembly that crores of money were misappropriated in the Valmiki Corporation, is that a lie?" Ashoka questioned.

He has also asked the Chief Minister whether returning of 14 sites by his wife Parvathi B M in the MUDA scam was an indirect confession of his crime. "Is it a lie when the Karnataka High Court loudly said that an investigation is needed against you in the MUDA scam?" the BJP leader asked. —*PTI*

BJP, JD(S) helped win Channapatna: DyCM

DKS trying to divide BJP, JD(U), says Ashoka

RAMANGARA, 24 NOV

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Sunday hinted at cracks and squabbling within the BJP and the JD(S), as he gave credit to the leaders of these parties for the defeat of JD(S) candidate Nikhil Kumaraswamy in the Channapatna assembly bypoll.

Congress candidate CP Yogeeshwara won in Channapatna bypoll with a margin of 25,413 votes against his nearest rival and NDA candidate Nikhil Kumaraswamy, for which the results were announced on Saturday.

The Congress party swept all the three assembly constituencies in Karnataka, namely Channapatna, Sandur and Shiggaon, which went for bypolls.

Nikhil is the son of Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy and grandson of former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda. In September last year, JD(S) joined the NDA led by BJP.

DK Shivakumar **PHOTO: PTI**

"Many people from across the parties have helped us in this election (Channapatna). Congress had only 16,000 votes in the previous assembly election. It increased in the Lok Sabha election," Shivakumar told reporters here.

"If the BJP and the JD(S) leaders had not supported us directly or indirectly, we wouldn't have got so many votes. I congratulate them," Shivakumar, who is also the Congress state president, said. Meanwhile, Leader of Opposition in the Karnataka Assembly R Ashoka flayed D K Shivakumar for creating the rift between BJP and the JD(S).

"Shivakumar should not try to pitch us (BJP and the JD-S) against each other," the former Deputy CM told reporters in Mandya district.

He sought to know who was responsible for Shivakumar's brother and three-time MP D K Suresh's defeat in this year's Lok Sabha election from Bengaluru Rural constituency.

"Who is responsible for D K Suresh's defeat? Wasn't it Congress? Wasn't it Siddaramaiah? Will he (Shivakumar) accept it? If he accepts, then I will speak on it," Ashoka said.

He alleged that Shivakumar got C P Yogeeshwara from the BJP as there was no candidate in Congress. —*PTI*

People during the All India Muslim Personal Law Board's 29th Ijlas-E-Aam at Quddus Sahab Eidgah maidan in Bengaluru on Sunday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Muslim Board slams Waqf Bill at 29th Annual Session

BENGALURU, 24 NOV

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) held its 29th annual session, Tahaffuz-e-Shariat, on Sunday with a massive conference held at Quddus Sahab Eidgah maidan in Bengaluru.

The event, which saw a turnout of over two lakh attendees, was primarily organised to voice strong opposition to the Waqf (Amendment) Bill, introduced by the Central Government in Parliament on 28 July. Participants from across the country and prominent figures, including Maulana Khalid Saifullah Rahmani, the current president of AIMPLB, and educationist Maulana Mujaddidi, gathered to show solidarity with the AIMPLB and to reiterate their commitment to safeguarding their constitutional and religious rights.

Maulana Iftikhar Ahmed Qasmi of Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind urged unity among the community to resist what he described as "systematic attempts" to marginalise the community. "We must remain united. This Bill is not an isolated event but part of a larger pattern of encroachments on our religious and constitutional freedoms," he cautioned. AIMPLB announced plans to intensify its campaign against the Bill, including nationwide awareness programmes and legal challenges if necessary. "This is just the beginning. We are prepared to explore every democratic and legal avenue to protect our rights," said Yaseen Ali Usmani. Meanwhile, BJP leader CT Ravi said that all the rights given to the Waqf shall be revoked and it is their main issue to remove the Waqf Board.

Amid an ongoing controversy over the Waqf Board land issue, Karnataka Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders staged a protest against the state government on Saturday, demanding the removal of the term "Waqf Board" from government records and raising concerns over alleged encroachments by the Waqf Board.

Protests were held in front of Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Tahsildar offices across the state under the banner 'Our Land, Our Right'.

Earlier, Karnataka BJP President BY Vijayendra said that every decision taken by the Karnataka government is anti-poor. —*Salar News*

JD(S) first family avoids discussion on bypoll debacle

BENGALURU, 24 NOV

The JD(S) first family on Sunday avoided speaking about the hat-trick defeat of Nikhil Kumaraswamy in the Channapatna Assembly bypoll.

Nikhil lost by a margin of 25,413 votes to the Congress candidate CP Yogeeshwara, for which the results were announced on Saturday.

Nikhil is the son of Union Minister H D Kumaraswamy and grandson of JD(S) patriarch and former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda.

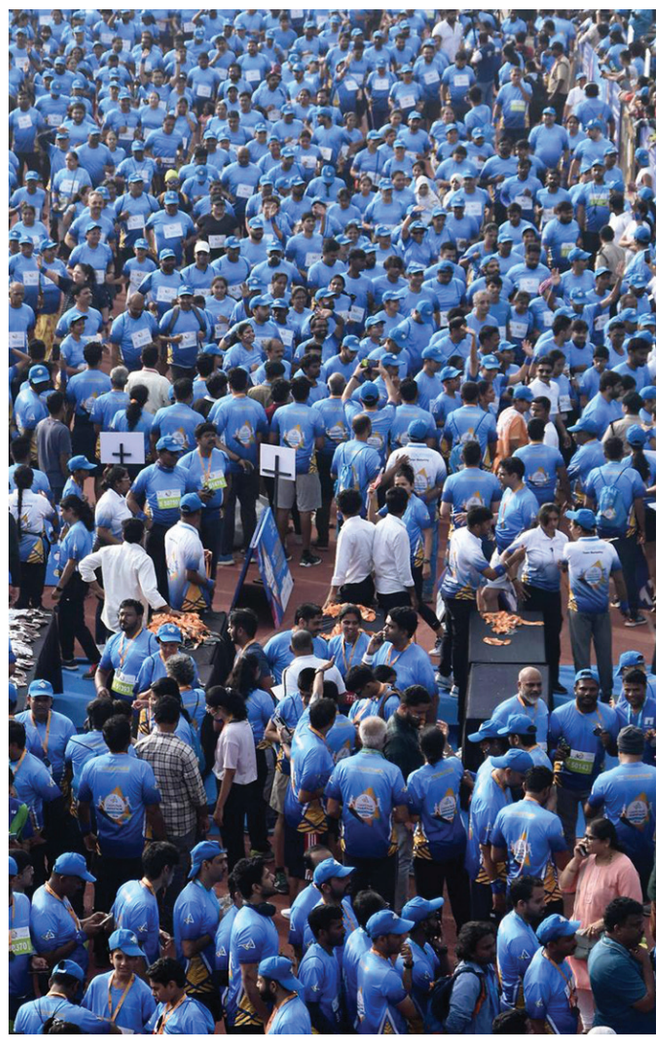
"I will visit the party office and answer all your queries, but not now," Deve Gowda told reporters on the sidelines of Sri Ramanuja Vishwa Vijaya Mahotsava in Bengaluru. Union Minister Kumaraswamy too opted not to speak about his son's defeat.

"There is no point in discussing the Channapatna election results. People have given their verdict and we have to accept it," the former Karnataka chief minister said.

Nikhil earlier lost the 2019 Lok Sabha election from Mandya as the JD(S) candidate against the BJP-backed independent candidate Sumalatha Ambareesh.

He also lost the 2023 Assembly election from Ramanagara against the Congress candidate H A Iqbal Hussain. —*PTI*

RUN, RUN, RUN



People gather at the marathon organised by Canara Bank at Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru on Sunday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

CM orders proposal for Chamundeshwari golden chariot

Responding to a letter by Congress MLC Dinesh Gooligowda, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah urged for a detailed report on the construction of a golden chariot for Goddess Chamundeshwari **PHOTO: SALAR**

MYSURU, 24 NOV

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday directed the principal secretary of the Department of Revenue, Muzrai, to submit a detailed proposal on the construction of a golden chariot for Goddess Chamundeshwari, the presiding deity of Chamundi Hill, in Mysuru.

The move followed a letter from Congress MLC Dinesh Gooligowda to the State government.

Responding to the letter, the Chief Minister urged for a detailed report.

To raise funds for the construction, Gooligowda suggested raising donations, including gold, from the devotees. He also proposed a separate Hundi (donation box) at the temple for this purpose.

- He said that the existing wooden chariot built by Coimbatore-based sculptors in 1928 which is used by the temple authorities during the Rathotsav (car festival) festival also reached is in a dilapidated condition now

He suggested that since the Chief Minister is also a devotee of Chamundeshwari, the chariot would be a fitting tribute to the temple.

He said that the existing wooden chariot built by Coimbatore-based sculptors in 1928 which is used by the temple authorities during the Rathotsav (car festival) festival also reached is in a dilapidated condition now.

The Rathotsav has been celebrated by Maharajas of Mysuru since 14th century.

Though the proposal for the construction of a golden chariot for Goddess Chamundeswari is an old one, which needed about Rs 100 crore an estimated, the MLC urged the Chief Minister to complete the construction of the golden chariot by the next Naada Habba Dasara celebration in his letter. —*Salar News*

SPECIAL TEAM

State govt approves 450 posts in police dept

BENGALURU, 24 NOV

State government on Sunday approved the recruitment of 450 officers to bolster operations at 33 special police stations proposed under the Directorate of Civil Rights Enforcement (DCRE).

The order was issued recently by Kalavathi SV, Joint Secretary to the Social Welfare Department following the instructions of the State Governor Thawar Chand Gehlot.

The Civil Rights Enforcement Directorate was established in 1975 with the aim of safeguarding the rights of marginalised communities, particularly Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The aim is to monitor and address violations of civil rights, ensure strict enforcement of laws protecting these communities, and provide a robust mechanism to tackle caste-based discrimination. Through this initiative, the State sought to uphold social justice, promote equality, and create an environment where vulnerable groups could access their legal rights without fear or prejudice.

The team would conduct thorough investigations within a stipulated time frame with the coordination of the local police **PHOTO: FB**

A proposal was submitted by the ministers during the cabinet meeting held in June this year. The proposal was to establish special police stations under the DCRE to strengthen law enforcement and ensure the effective handling of causes related to civil rights across the State. Joint Secretary, Social Welfare Department, said that the specialised police team would register complaints, conduct thorough investigations within a stipulated time frame with the coordination of the local police, and file charge sheets in competent courts. One such police station will be set up in each district and two in Bengaluru city. —*Salar News*

PRIDE PARADE

Members of the LGBT community and allies take part in Namma Bengaluru Pride Rally 2024, as part of Queer Habba in Bengaluru on Sunday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Manipur scraps decision to reopen schools, colleges

IMPHAL, 24 NOV

The Manipur government scrapped its decision to reopen schools and colleges in Imphal Valley and Jiribam district on Monday, officials said. Schools and colleges were shut in Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal, Bishnupur, Kakching, and Jiribam for about a week due to prohibitory orders issued in view of fresh violence, they said. In a fresh order issued on Sunday night, the Directorate of Education - Schools said, "The school reopening order... dated 24 November regarding resumption of normal classes for all schools of the state, government, government aided, private and central schools, is hereby cancelled and all schools of valley districts will continue to remain closed on 25th and 26th of November." A similar order was issued for colleges as well —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Combing ops on in J&K's Baramulla for terror hideouts

JAMMU, 24 NOV

A day after busting a terrorist hideout in Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir, security forces on Sunday conducted a search operation in the Sidhra area of Jammu district. The operation was conducted on leads that terrorists had stockpiled explosives in the area. Baramulla Police, Budgam Police and 62 RR, in a joint operation on Saturday, busted a terror hideout in the Kunzer area of Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir and recovered a cache of arms and ammunition. The operation was conducted in the forests adjoining Malwa village, which falls under the jurisdiction of Kunzer Police Station. Earlier on the same day, Baramulla Police attached properties worth Rs 1.72 crore of a drug peddler named Rafiq Ahmad Khan in Trikanjan Boniyar. —*PTI*

Oppn accuses Goa BJP govt of 'snooping'

PANAJI, 24 NOV

The Opposition in Goa on Sunday said the BJP government was targeting them because of an alleged job scam, and police were snooping on leaders. Addressing the media along with Congress MLA Carlos Alvares Ferreira and AAP Goa chief Amit Palekar, Goa Forward Party president Vijai Sardesai produced CCTV footage to show police arriving at his farmhouse in Molcornmen village. "The government is trying to intimidate opposition parties... The BJP's focus is to have an Opposition-free Goa... The government is nervous about the cash-for-jobs scam... Instead of snooping on us, police must go after those named in the scam," he said. "If the BJP is not involved, why is it resisting calls for a judicial inquiry?" he asked. —*PTI*

TMC workers clash over children's fair

GHATAL, 24 NOV

TMC workers, allegedly belonging to different factions, on Sunday came to blows in front of actor-turned-politician and the party's local MP Deepak Adhikari during a meeting called for organising a children's fair at Ghatal in Paschim Medinipur district of West Bengal. Sources said chairs were broken and food meant for distribution were strewn across the venue after supporters of Adhikari, better known as Dev, and former MLA Shankar Dolui clashed with sticks and fists. Police confirmed the incident and said an investigation is underway. The two factions had a long-standing rivalry over the selection of organising committee members to conduct "Shishu Mela". —*PTI*

Mahayuti, BJP panel to decide Maharashtra CM

Failure to have an Oppn leader is Cong's karma, says BJP

MUMBAI, 24 NOV

Maharashtra BJP chief Chandrashekhar Bawankule on Sunday said leaders of the ruling Mahayuti alliance and the BJP leadership will decide who will be the next chief minister of the state.

Bawankule said all sections of the society supported the BJP in the Maharashtra assembly polls and rejected the Congress. He pointed out that the Congress' state unit chief Nana Patole managed to win with a wafer thin margin of around 200 votes in Sakoli seat.

The BJP-led Mahayuti, which also comprises the Shiv Sena of Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and NCP of deputy CM Ajit Pawar, on Saturday retained power in the state by bagging 230 of the 288 assembly seats.

The BJP bagged 132 seats, the Shiv Sena won 57, while the NCP got 41 seats. The dream of Congress-led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) to wrest power fizzled, with the opposition combine managing to garner only 46 seats.

In the MVA, the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar) candidates won 10 seats, Congress won 16, while Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) won 20 seats.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde (centre) with Deputy Chief Ministers Devendra Fadnavis and Ajit Pawar PHOTO: PTI

Answering a query on the state's next chief minister, Bawankule said the decision would be taken by the Mahayuti leaders and the BJP's parliamentary board. The selection process would be in-line with the alliance's plans for governance, he added.

The people of Maharashtra have "rejected" the Congress and Patole should pay heed to some of his own colleagues who have been seeking his resignation as the state party chief, Bawankule said.

The Congress' "lies" during the poll campaign were to blame for no party getting enough seats to stake claim for the post of leader of opposition in the assembly.

Notably, the Mahayuti's landslide in Maharashtra will leave the state assembly without a leader of opposition as no party outside the ruling alliance has been able to get the mandatory minimum 29 seats.

"The mandate of the people in this assembly election is against Congress. Having no leader of opposition in the Maharashtra legislative assembly is the karma of Congress," Bawankule said. —*PTI*

'Disrespecting women cost MVA dearly'

New Delhi/Shimla, 24 Nov

A day after the Mahayuti alliance trounced the MVA in the Maharashtra Assembly elections, BJP MP Kangana Ranaut on Sunday likened the opposition alliance with "daitya" and said it suffered this fate because it had disrespected women. "I expected such a bad failure of Uddhav Thackeray. We can identify who is a 'devta (god)' and who is a 'daitya (satan)' depending on if they respect women or work for their welfare." "They demolished my home and verbally abused me," she alleged. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

MVA to introspect 'shocking' drubbing

T'PURAM/ NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

A day after BJP-led Mahayuti retained power in Maharashtra, the Congress on Sunday said the party and other partners of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) will collectively introspect the reasons of their drubbing in the crucial polls.

AICC general secretary KC Venugopal said the assembly poll results in Maharashtra was "shocking" and "unbelievable".

"We don't understand what happened. It was not just the debacle of the Congress but that of the entire Maha Vikas Aghadi. Let us first get a clear picture of what has happened," he said.

Venugopal said the party was surprised by the entire election procedure after the Maharashtra and Haryana drubbings.

When asked whether the grand-old-party suspected any sabotage in the Maharashtra election results, the leader said they were not raising any such allegation soon after the debacle.

"We suffered huge setbacks in the strongholds of Sharad Pawar, Uddhav Thackeray and that of the Congress. It is the failure of not just the Congress party but that of the entire alliance," he said.

"So, we will sit together and collectively introspect (its reasons)," Venugopal added.

When asked about Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's huge win in Wayanad, the AICC general secretary said it was the result of collective work of the entire party leaders and workers.

"The party expected this majority in Wayanad. Soon after the polling, there was a concern about the majority. But, after the internal assessment of the party, we were sure that the low poll percentage would not impact Priyanka's majority," he said. —PTI

Samajwadi Party (SP) President Akhilesh Yadav addresses a press conference at the party headquarters, in Lucknow, Sunday. PHOTO: PTI

Sambhal clash a diversion bid by BJP: Akhilesh

LUCKNOW, 24 NOV

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Sunday alleged the violence in Uttar Pradesh's Sambhal district over the survey of a mosque was "orchestrated" by the BJP, the government and the administration "to divert attention from electoral malpractice".

Police used tear gas and "minor force" in the face of stone pelting by locals in Sambhal on Sunday as tension escalated during a second survey of the Mughal-era mosque, claimed to be originally the site of an ancient Hindu temple.

Police have detained 10 people and launched a probe into the violence, an official said.

Tension has been brewing in Sambhal over the past few days after the Jama Masjid was surveyed on Tuesday on the orders of a local court, following a petition that claimed that a Harihar temple stood at the site. A day after the Uttar Pradesh bypoll results were declared and the Samajwadi Party managed to win just two seats, while the BJP and its ally RLD bagged the other seven, Yadav levelled serious allegations against the police and administration.

He asked when a survey of the mosque was already done, why was a new survey conducted, "that too, in the morning and without preparation?"

Meanwhile, about 35 SP workers were detained when they were travelling to Lucknow from Moradabad to protest against "rigging" in the Kundarki assembly bypoll, a top official said.

Akhilesh appealed to President Draupudi Murmi and several institutions, including the Supreme Court, to take immediate cognisance of the matter and ensure that BJP government did not commit any injustice against those raising their voices for their right to vote. —*PTI*

Won't contest until fake voting ends: Mayawati

LUCKNOW, 24 NOV

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief Mayawati on Sunday alleged irregularities in voting in the recent Uttar Pradesh bypolls and said her party will not contest byelections in future, particularly in the state, "until Election Commission takes measures to prevent fake voting".

Byelections in Uttar Pradesh were held on 20 November and results were declared on Saturday. The BSP contested all nine seats but failed to win any.

"Given this situation, our party has decided that until the Election Commission of India takes strict measures to prevent fake voting, we will not participate in any by-elections across the country, particularly in Uttar Pradesh. I am specifically referring to by-elections here," Mayawati said. —*PTI*

'Campaign against infiltration not political'

JAMSHEDPUR, 24 NOV

Former Jharkhand chief minister Champai Soren on Sunday said the BJP's movement against the alleged increasing Bangladeshi infiltration in Jharkhand was social in nature and not political or aimed at elections.

Soren, who won the Seraikela seat in the assembly polls, claimed that tribals have become a minority in many districts of the state, including Pakur and Sahibganj.

"As we have said earlier, our movement against the ever-increasing Bangladeshi infiltration in Jharkhand is not a political or election issue, but a social campaign. We clearly believe that infiltrators should not get any kind of protection on this land of heroes," he said in a post on X in Hindi.

"Today, the tribal community has become a minority in many districts, including Pakur and Sahibganj. What will happen if we cannot protect the lands of the indigenous people and the dignity of our women?" he added.

Soren announced the BJP would very soon launch the next phase of its campaign in the Santhal Parganas over the issue.

"Governments will come and go, parties will be formed and dissolved but our society must remain, our tribal identity must remain, otherwise nothing will be left," he said.

Alleged infiltration from Bangladesh was one of the key issues on which BJP fought the assembly elections, but it failed to cut much ice among the people. —*PTI*

Champai Soren, who won the Seraikela seat claimed that tribals have become a minority in many Jharkhand districts PHOTO: PTI

Eastern states are nation's growth engine: PM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks during the Odisha Parba celebrations, in New Delhi, on Sunday PHOTO: PTI

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Sunday that his government considers India's eastern region as the country's growth engine, while the area was considered backward earlier.

Addressing a gathering at the "Odisha Parba" event here, he said investments of Rs 45,000 crore have been approved within 100 days of the formation of a new government in the state. "Odisha has always been a land of seers and scholars. The way the scholars here took our religious texts to every household and connected the public with those, it has played a crucial role in the cultural prosperity of India. "There was a time when India's eastern region and the states there were called backward. However, I consider India's eastern region as the country's growth engine. That is why we have prioritised the development of India's eastern region," he said.

"The budget is three times higher than what it was 10 years ago. We are working rapidly in every sector for Odisha's development and the budget has been increased by 30 per cent this year," Modi added.

He informed that the Centre is committed to promoting ease of doing business in Odisha and said investments of Rs 45,000 crore have been approved within 100 days of the formation of BJP government in the state.

"Odisha Parba" is a flagship event conducted by the Odia Samaj, trust in providing valuable support towards the preservation and promotion of Odia heritage. —*PTI*

HONOURING RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS

No polls during martyrdom fortnight: SAD

CHANDIGARH, 24 NOV

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) on Sunday urged the Punjab government not to hold civic body elections during the fortnight of the martyrdom of the sons of the tenth Sikh Guru Gobind Singh from 15 to 31 December.

"The SAD urges the Punjab government and the state election commission not to fix local bodies elections during the annual historic occasion of martyrdom fortnight of four 'Sahibzadas' (four sons of Guru Gobind Singh) and Mata Gujri ji (mother of Guru Gobind Singh) which falls between 15 to 31 December," SAD leader Daljit Singh Cheema said.

The former president of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, has said that any elections during the holy month of Ramadan would disrupt the peaceful atmosphere and hurt religious sentiments of the people. He urged the government and state election commission to consider the sentiments of the people when deciding the dates of the elections. The elections for five municipal corporations and 42 municipal councils will be held by December.

SAD leader Daljit Singh Cheema requested not to finalise the dates for the local body elections PHOTO: ANI

Apart from this, Akali Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh plans to convene a meeting of Sikh high priests to discuss the case of Sukhbir Singh Badal, who was declared guilty of religious misconduct by the Sikh clergy.

In a brief conversation with the media, the Jatheder said:

- Akali Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh plans to convene a meeting of Sikh high priests to discuss the case of Sukhbir Singh Badal, who was declared guilty of religious misconduct

"Punjab cannot develope without the Akali Dal. It is the only party that has consistently advocated for Punjab, Punjabis, and Punjabiyat. Therefore, it is imperative for the Akali Dal to emerge stronger." The Jatheder announced that a meeting will be convened to decide on the case of Sukhbir Singh Badal, a significant issue in the Sikh world. Giani Raghbir Singh confirmed that the decision on the type of religious punishment for Sukhbir would be made during the meeting. —*Agencies*

CPI(M) accuses UDF of ties with communal forces

T'PURAM, 24 NOV

The ruling CPI(M) has accused the Congress-led UDF of winning the Palakkad Assembly seat in the recent bypoll through alleged alliances with communal forces. CPI(M) central committee member and former minister AK Balan claimed that the RSS, Congress, and the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) had struck a 'deal' to undermine the Left Democratic Front (LDF).

UDF candidate Rahul Mamkootathil retained the Palakkad seat with a significant margin of 18,840 votes, securing 58,389 votes against BJP's C Krishna Kumar, who garnered 39,549 votes, according to the Election Commission. LDF candidate Dr P Sarin finished third with 37,293 votes.

Balan alleged that former BJP leader Sandeep Varier, now part of the Congress, acted as a conduit between the UDF and a faction of the RSS. He noted that Varier campaigning for the UDF marked a historical first, alongside claims of backing from SDPI and Jamaat-e-Islami.

- Balan asserted that the CPI(M) did not lose its core voter base, with the vote margin between the CPI(M) and BJP narrowing significantly compared to the 2021 elections

Despite the defeat, Balan asserted that the CPI(M) did not lose its core voter base, with the vote margin between the CPI(M) and BJP narrowing significantly compared to the 2021 Assembly elections. Minister for Local Self-Governments MB Rajesh reinforced that the CPI(M) fought a robust campaign and suggested that the UDF's success was aided by communal alliances. "Although the party did not achieve the expected results, it was able to increase its vote share," he told a TV channel on Sunday. —*PTI*

UP: Mentally ill woman vandalises Deendayal's statue

UTTAR PRADESH, 24 NOV

A statue of former Jan Sangh president Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya installed at a roundabout in the Kotwali Nagar area here was vandalised, police said on Sunday. According to CCTV camera footage, a woman, who appeared to be mentally ill, broke the glass encasing the bust Saturday night. Enraged at the incident, members of the Brahmin community staged a protest on Sunday, demanding the vandal be booked under the National Security Act. Etah Senior Superintendent of Police Shyam Narayan Singh told journalists that the act was committed by a woman who appeared to be mentally ill. She would be caught and sent to Agra for treatment, he added. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Air India Express increases flight operations from NE

GUWAHATI, 24 NOV

Low-cost airline Air India Express has announced an increase in flight operations from three major destinations in the northeast – Guwahati, Agartala and Imphal – as part of its winter schedule. This is part of the airlines' expansion of winter services across the country, it said in a statement here. Air India Express has increased its operations to 106 weekly flights from 63 last winter, from Guwahati. The airline has expanded its services to eight domestic destinations and one-stop connections to 18 domestic and six international destinations from Guwahati. The addition of Agartala in September 2024 has increased its weekly flights from 14 to 21 and connects two destinations Guwahati and Kolkata directly. *—PTI*

West Bengal: 10 houses gutted in massive fire

KOLKATA, 24 NOV

At least 10 houses were gutted after a massive fire broke out in the Ultadanga area of Kolkata in West Bengal on Sunday, fire department officials said. According to the officials, the fire broke out at around 7.30 am today. Efforts to douse the blaze was underway at the time of filing this report. "Soon after receiving the information, the officials of fire department immediately reached to the spot and are engaged in the firefighting operation," the officials said. As per the officials, six fire tenders were present at the spot. The cause of the fire and the extent of damage caused is yet to be ascertained, they added. More details are awaited. *—ANI*

7 dead in auto-bus collision in Andhra's Anantapur

ANANTAPUR, 24 NOV

A horrific collision between an RTC bus and an auto rickshaw carrying agricultural labourers in Thalagaspalle, Garldinne Mandal, has resulted in the deaths of seven people and left four others critically injured. The incident occurred when 12 labourers from Nellutla village were returning from work. Two individuals died at the scene, while two others succumbed to their injuries en route to the hospital, and three more passed away during treatment. The injured are receiving care at Anantapur Government Hospital. Following the accident, District SP Jagadeesh and DSP Venkateswarulu assessed the scene, and the bus driver has been taken into custody for questioning. Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu expressed deep sorrow over the tragedy and announced a compensation of Rs 5 lakh for the victims' families, along with instructions for proper medical care for the injured. *—ANI*

Protest rally marks 3rd day of Vaishno Devi ropeway strike

Hundreds of pony & palanquin owners fear joblessness

JAMMU, 24 NOV

Hundreds of shopkeepers and labourers took out a protest rally on Sunday on the third day of their strike against a proposed ropeway project along the trek leading to the Vaishno Devi shrine atop Trikuta hills in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district, officials said.

The protesters also held a sit-in outside the office of the subdivisional magistrate and Shalimar Park in Katra town, the base camp for pilgrims visiting the shrine. They raised slogans against the shrine board and the ropeway project, which they feel would render them jobless.

The three-day strike by shopkeepers, and pony and palanquin owners started on Friday after the Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board announced plans to proceed with a Rs 250-crore passenger ropeway project between Tarakote Marg to Sanji Chhat along the 12-kilometre track.

Shopkeepers, pony and palanquin owners stage a protest in Katra on the third day of their strike, in Reasi, on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

The protesters held a peaceful rally along the traditional trek route, demanding immediate withdrawal of the proposal or proper rehabilitation of all families likely to be affected by the project, the officials said.

Most private shops along the trek route remained closed for a third day while pony and palanquin owners did not provide service to the pilgrims, causing immense hardships to many devotees even as the pilgrimage continued without disruption.

Last week, the shrine board announced implementation of the long-awaited ropeway project to facilitate a safer and faster journey for the pilgrims. *—PTI*

SAYS EX-CJI

'Social media manipulating case outcomes'

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

DY Chandrachud *PHOTO: PTI*

Former Chief Justice DY Chandrachud on Sunday said social media is being used by special interest groups to influence outcome of cases and judges need to be wary of them.

He also noted that people nowadays want to form an opinion on the basis of 20 seconds they see on YouTube or any other social media platform, saying it poses a great danger.

"Today there are special interest groups, pressure groups who are trying to use social media to affect the minds of the courts and the outcomes of cases. Every citizen is entitled to understand what is the basis of a decision and to express their opinions on the decisions of the court. But when this goes beyond the decisions of the court and targets individual judges, then it sort of raises fundamental questions about - Is this truly freedom of speech and expression?" he said.

Chandrachud also said that in a democracy the power to decide the validity of laws is entrusted to the constitutional courts. Chandrachud retired on 10 November. *— PTI*

Malayalam actress reverses stance, pursues sexual charge case

KOCHI, 24 NOV

A 51-year-old Malayalam actress, who recently lodged sexual harassment complaints against prominent actors in the film industry, reaffirmed on Sunday that she will not withdraw her complaints and will pursue them legally to seek justice.

The actress had announced two days ago her decision to drop the cases, citing despair and a "lack of support from the government."

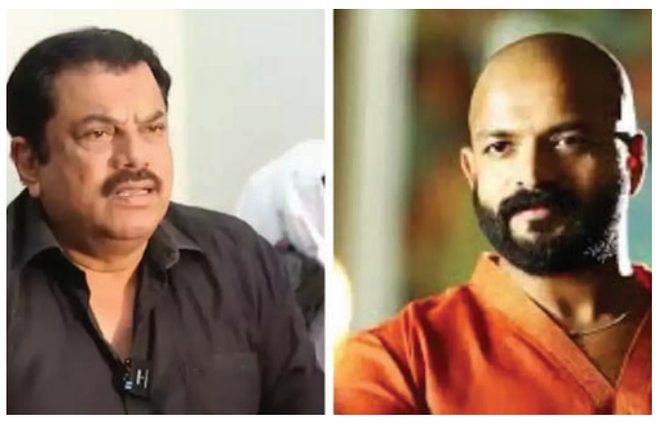
However, speaking to television channels, she said her family had encouraged her to continue her fight, prompting her to reconsider.

"My husband called me and urged me to proceed with the cases. He assured me of full family support, saying there was no reason to back down after the harassment I endured," she told the media on Sunday.

The actress had accused several male actors, including CPI(M) MLA M Mukesh, of sexual abuse, a few years ago.

On Friday, she expressed reluctance to continue the complaints, citing a "lack of support and protection from the Kerala government," as well as "mental exhaustion."

She alleged deliberate attempts to falsely implicate her in a POCSO case following her harassment complaints against actors such as Mukesh, Jayasurya Maniyanpilla Raju, and Idavela Babu.



CPI(M) MLA M Mukesh and actor Jayasurya *PHOTO: X*

The allegations surfaced amid the revelations of the Justice Hema Committee report, which detailed widespread harassment and exploitation of women in the Malayalam film industry.

The actress reiterated her commitment to cooperate with the investigation, stressing that no complaint would be withdrawn. *— PTI*

2020 DELHI RIOTS

25 charged for murder, main accused killed

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

A court in Delhi has ordered the framing of serious charges, including murder and dacoity, against 25 individuals involved in the 2020 northeast Delhi riots that led to the death of head constable Ratan Lal. Additional Sessions Judge Pulastya Pramachala made it clear that the right to protest does not include the right to violence and property damage.

The court's ruling followed evidence presented regarding the brutal assault on a police team at Chand Bagh on February 24, 2020, where Lal was fatally injured. His post-mortem revealed multiple injuries, including a fatal gunshot wound. The judge noted that the protesters had come armed and were intent on demonstrating their power through violence, indicating a premeditated conspiracy.

Additionally, in a separate incident, the main accused in the murder of Delhi Police constable Kiranpal was killed in an encounter with police in the Sangam Vihar area. Raghav alias Rocky was fatally shot after he allegedly opened fire on officers who had asked him to surrender. Meanwhile, another suspect, Deepak, has been arrested by the Delhi Police's Crime Branch.

PHOTO: PTI

The coordinated violence during the February 2020 riots resulted in over 50 deaths and left hundreds injured, marking one of the deadliest communal clashes in recent Indian history. *—PTI*

AIR QUALITY IMPROVES SLIGHTLY IN DELHI

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

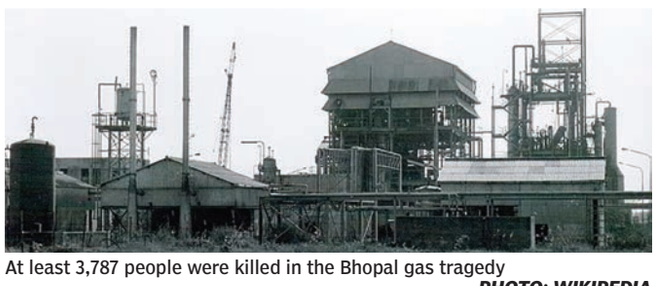
The air quality in the national capital improved from the 'severe' to the 'very poor' category on Sunday morning.

At 8am, the Air Quality Index (AQI) was recorded at 357, falling under the 'very poor' category, compared to the 24-hour average AQI of 412 at 4pm on Saturday, according to the Central Pollution Control Board.

However, Anand Vihar remained in the 'severe' category with an AQI of 404.

Delhi's air quality has been hazardous for nearly a month, dropping from 'very poor' to 'severe plus' and then back to 'severe plus', with wind conditions providing some relief on Friday and back to 'severe' on Saturday.

The weather office reported a severe weather event with a minimum temperature of 12 degrees Celsius, forecasted shallow fog, and a maximum temperature of 28 degrees Celsius. The humidity level was high at 75 percent at 8.30 am. *—PTI*



At least 3,787 people were killed in the Bhopal gas tragedy *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

'Bhopal gas leak survivors still facing health issues'

BHOPAL, 24 NOV

A former forensic doctor has revealed that the impact of the toxic gas leak from the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal 40 years ago continues to affect the next generation of survivors. The catastrophic incident on 2-3 December, 1984, resulted in the deaths of at least 3,787 people and harmed half a million individuals.

At an event hosted by organisations representing gas tragedy survivors, Dr DK Satpathy, former head of the forensics department at Gandhi Medical College, recounted his experiences, having performed 875 post-mortems on the disaster's first day and witnessed an additional 18,000 autopsies in the following years. He criticised Union Carbide's dismissal of concerns regarding the effects of poison on unborn children, claiming blood samples from deceased pregnant women showed that 50 per cent of the toxic substances present in the mothers were also found in their children.

Dr Satpathy asserted that children born to survivors are now exhibiting health issues due to these substances, predicting that these effects will persist for generations. *—PTI*

Two more infants die, toll in Jhansi fire rises to 17

UTTAR PRADESH, 24 NOV

Two more infants rescued from a fire that ripped through the Maharani Laxmi Bai Medical College here have died, taking the total toll in the blaze to 17, a senior official said on Sunday.

Thirty-nine newborns were rescued from a devastating fire in the medical college hospital's neonatal intensive care unit on the night of 15 November.

Dr Narendra Singh Sengar, the medical college's principal, told PTI that of 39 infants rescued, two more died on Saturday.

While 10 babies died on the night of the fire, the remainder succumbed to their "illnesses", he said.

A post-mortem of the two bodies was done on Saturday. *—PTI*

CRPF sets up three FOBs in Bastar to carry anti-Naxal ops

RAIPUR, 24 NOV

The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has established three new forward bases (FOBs) in Chhattisgarh's Bastar region, a hotspot for Maoist violence. These bases, located in Tumpalpad and Rayagudem in Sukma district, and Kondapalli in Bijapur district, will serve as strategic hubs for increased anti-Naxal operations.

Operational in the last week, these FOBs aim to provide security forces with launch points for targeted, intelligence-driven actions against Naxal activities. The areas selected have long been logistical centres for Maoists. Experts note that Kondapalli was a significant recruitment location for the Maoists' PLGA battalion and a training site, while Tumpalpad acted as a corridor for their movement.

- These installations are expected to act as physical barriers, restricting Naxal movements in areas previously deemed 'no go' zones

The 74th battalion has operationalised the Tumpalpad FOB, while the 170th unit established Kondapalli, with support from the CRPF's CoBRA jungle warfare unit.

These installations are expected to act as physical barriers, restricting Naxal movements in areas previously deemed 'no go' zones for government forces. Over the past three to four years, the CRPF has set up more than 40 such FOBs in Chhattisgarh, as the battle against Left Wing Extremism continues to intensify in the region. *—PTI*

UP COPS RULE

Veg diet, alcohol-ban in focus for Maha Kumbh

PRAYAGRAJ, 24 NOV

A strict vegetarian diet, alcohol abstinence and behavioural training are among the steps the Uttar Pradesh Police is taking to ensure its personnel act as "servants of faith" and create a pleasant experience for the devotees gathering in this holy city for the Maha Kumbh.

The Maha Kumbh will commence on January 13 on the occasion of Paush Purnima and conclude on 26 February on Mahashivratri.

Senior Superintendent of Police (Kumbh) Rajesh Dwivedi emphasised that the primary focus of the police, alongside maintaining security, would be to foster a welcoming environment for the pilgrims.

He said, "Our aim is to ensure that the devotees have a pleasant experience, and the police behave with warmth -- not just as enforcers of the law but as servants of faith."

Policemen undergo training programme in Prayagraj on 24 November. *PHOTO: PTI*

Police personnel to be deployed for the Maha Kumbh are undergoing behaviour-focused training at a designated facility within the mela area. External trainers are also being invited to impart lessons in etiquette and public service.

So far, 1,500 police personnel have completed the training. By the time the mela commences, 40,000 personnel will have completed the exercise.

The force is also receiving expert instruction from the National Police Academy. Personnel trained there are now preparing trainers who, in turn, are equipping the larger police contingent for their role at the mela.

An AI chatbot -- Kumbh Sahayak -- is being developed to assist the devotees with information in more than 10 languages via the Bhashini app. This initiative is designed to bridge language barriers and provide instant support to the vast number of devotees. *—PTI*

Puri temple urges ASI to begin Bhandar repairs

BHUBANESWAR, 24 NOV

PHOTO: PTI

The Shree Jagannath Temple Administration (SJTA) has requested the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) authorities to immediately take up the repair, maintenance and conservation work of the entire Ratna Bhandar (treasury) in the 12th century shine in Puri.

SJTA chief administrator Arabinda Padhee on Saturday said the temple administration will extend all its cooperation to ASI in the repair and maintenance of the Ratna Bhandar.

He said the SJTA has all along been careful about the stability and security of the temple.

Earlier, the ASI had conducted the GPR-GPS survey of the 12th-century shrine's Ratna Bhandar (treasury) with the assistance of Hyderabad-based NGRI (National Geophysical Research Institute).

Padhee said the ASI has given a 45-page report on the survey. "There has been indication of damage done to the floor and wall of the Ratna Bhandar. However, the technical report needs to the studied further by our team", he said.

Ratna Bhandar was reopened in July this year after 46 years for an inventory of valuables and the repair of its structure, officials said. *—PTI*

FRESH SNOWFALL

A view of the snow-covered areas as Gurez Valley receives fresh snowfall, in Bandipora, Jammu and Kahmir
PHOTO: ANI

Highly educated Indians are often underemployed

About half of India's graduates are considered employable, according to a recent survey highlighting the disconnect between the country's rapid development, its massive youth population and the needs of its quickly evolving labor market.

The India Skills Report of 2024 interviewed hundreds of thousands of final-year students and postgraduates, judging their skills based on an employability test and the data gathered from about 150 organisations in various industries. Ultimately, only 51.25 per cent were deemed competent enough to be hired.

For some, this is a reason to be optimistic — the latest figures show a massive jump from less than 34 per cent employability in 2014. But many economists say it is clear that a large number of Indian universities still don't equip their students with real-world skills.

"Mere degrees are not enough for getting jobs, because job readiness is closely correlated to the development of skills and apprenticeship. What is more, many engineering graduates are not industry-ready," Lekha Chakraborty, professor and chair of the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy said. Chakraborty, who has studied the issue closely, points to India's healthcare sector, particularly when it comes to filling positions for doctors and nurses. Despite having a large pool of trained individuals, there is still a dearth of specialist doctors at rural health centers, and the crisis has worsened over the years.

As of March 2023, only 4,413 specialist doctors were available for community health centers when almost 22,000 were needed, a survey showed.

"The current training programs often do not adequately prepare graduates for the realities of the healthcare system or align with the needs of local populations. This leads to inadequacies in resource allocation and workforce distribution," Chakraborty said.

According to a survey, as of March 2023, only 4,413 specialist doctors were available for community health centers when almost 22,000 were needed
PHOTO: AI

This year's India Employment Report also shows that nearly 83 per cent of the country's unemployed workforce is made up of youth aged 15 to 29. Strikingly, nearly two out of three unemployed people in India in 2022 were young and educated — meaning they have secondary or higher education.

Arun Kumar, a retired professor of economics at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, told DW that the government has not made sufficient investments in the health and education sectors and has yet to recognize their critical roles in improving national outcomes."The education system is flawed and that needs to be set right first. We produce 50,000 world class students and most of them go abroad while the rest stay back while what we need are millions. If we must be a powerhouse of skills and technology, then we must cast a serious eye at why," said Kumar.

Kumar's concerns about India's future seem particularly relevant in light of the latest Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) that assesses the critical trends in education, particularly focusing on enrollment, learning outcomes, and dropout rates.

While surveying youth aged 14 to18, the report revealed that 42 per cent cannot read simple sentences in English, and more than half struggle with basic division problems.

It also revealed that over 96 per cent of 14-year-olds are going to school, but only 67.4 per cent remain there by the age of 18, showing a massive dropout rate for teenagers.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has spoken about India taking on a leadership role in global affairs as 'Vishwa guru' [world's teacher] given its population and scale of economy, but that cannot happen unless we change matters," added Kumar.Millions of young people enter the labor market every year in the world's most populous country. And with the median age in India being 28, the nation is nearing the "demographic dividend" stage — an era in a society's history when the ratio of the young working population is high and the number of dependents — including children, the elderly and the unemployed — is relatively low, leading to an economic boost.

However, some experts believe that India must align educational outcomes with market demands in order to reap the benefits.

In the last budget, the government announced several key initiatives related to apprenticeships aimed at enhancing skill development and employment opportunities. The reforms aim to help 10 million young people over five years.

But the challenge lies not only in addressing current mismatches, but also in preparing for future shifts in the labour market due to technological advancements and changing economic needs.

—DW India

SALAR سالار

4 billion-year-old crystal from Mars shows presence of water

Water is ubiquitous on Earth – about 70 per cent of Earth's surface is covered by the stuff. Water is in the air, on the surface and inside rocks. Geologic evidence suggests water has been stable on Earth since about 4.3 billion years ago.

The history of water on early Mars is less certain. Determining when water first appeared, where and for how long, are all burning questions that drive Mars exploration. If Mars was once habitable, some amount of water was required.

Water has long been recognised to have played an important role in early Martian history. To place our results in a broader context, let's first consider what "early Mars" means in terms of the Martian geological timescale, and then consider the different ways to look for water on Mars.

Like Earth, Mars formed about 4.5 billion years ago. The history of Mars has four geological periods. These are the Amazonian (from today back to 3 billion years), the Hesperian (3 billion to 3.7 billion years ago), the Noachian (3.7 billion to 4.1 billion years ago) and the Pre-Noachian (4.1 billion to about 4.5 billion years ago).

Evidence for water on Mars was first reported in the 1970s when NASA's Mariner 9 spacecraft captured images of river valleys on the Martian surface. Later orbital missions, including Mars Global Surveyor and Mars Express, detected the widespread presence of hydrated clay minerals on the surface. These would have needed water.

The Martian river valleys and clay minerals are mainly found in Noachian terrains, which cover about 45 per cent of Mars. In addition, orbiters also found large flood channels – called outflow channels – in Hesperian terrains. These suggest the short-lived presence of water on the surface, perhaps from groundwater release.

There are three ways to hunt for water on Mars. The first is using observations of the surface made by orbiting spacecraft. The second is using ground-based observations such as those taken by Mars rovers.

The third way is to study Martian meteorites that have landed on Earth, which is what we did.

In fact, the only Pre-Noachian material we have available to study directly is found in meteorites from Mars. A small number of all meteorites that have landed on Earth have come from our neighbouring planet.

An even smaller subset of those meteorites, believed to have been ejected from Mars during a single asteroid impact, contain Pre-Noachian material.

The "poster child" of this group is an extraordinary rock called NWA7034, or Black Beauty.

Black Beauty is a famous Martian meteorite made up of broken-up surface material, or regolith. In addition to rock fragments, it contains zircons that formed from 4.48 billion to 4.43 billion years ago. These are the oldest pieces of Mars known. While studying trace elements in one of these ancient zircons we found evidence of hydrothermal processes – meaning they were exposed to hot water when they formed in the distant past.

Trace elements, water and a connection to ore deposits

The zircon we studied is 4.45 billion years old. Within it, iron, aluminium and sodium are preserved in abundance patterns like concentric layers, similar to an onion.

This pattern, called oscillatory zoning, indicates that incorporation of these elements into the zircon occurred during its igneous history, in magma.

The problem is that iron, aluminium and sodium aren't normally found in crystalline igneous zircon – so how did these elements end up in the Martian zircon?

The answer is hot water.

In Earth rocks, finding zircon with growth zoning patterns for elements like iron, aluminium and sodium is rare. One of the only places where it has been described is from Olympic Dam in South Australia, a giant copper, uranium and gold deposit. The metals in places like Olympic Dam were concentrated by hydrothermal (hot water) systems moving through rocks during magmatism.

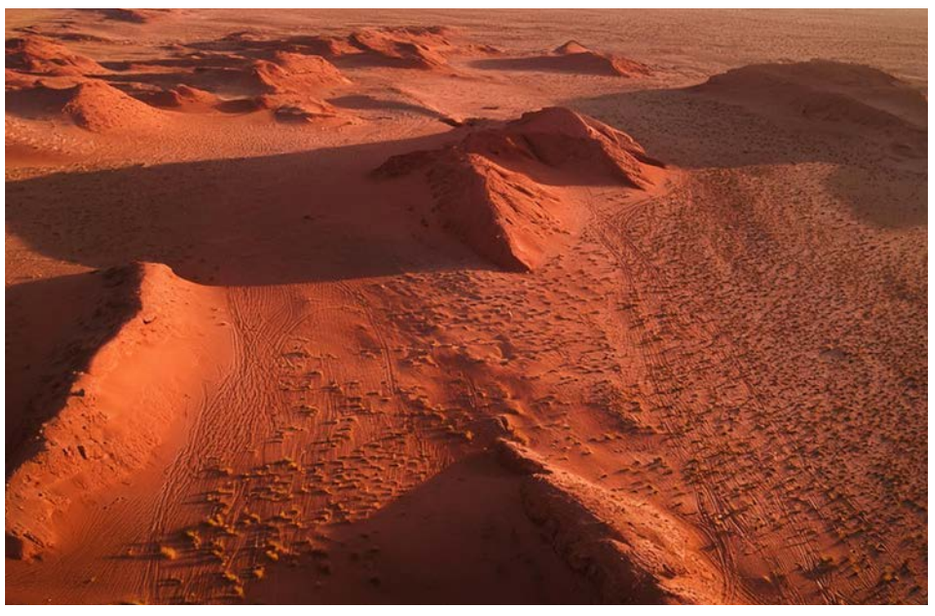
Hydrothermal systems form anywhere that hot water, heated by volcanic plumbing systems, moves through rocks. Spectacular geysers at places like Yellowstone National Park in the United States form when hydrothermal water erupts at Earth's surface.

Finding a hydrothermal Martian zircon raises the intriguing possibility of ore deposits forming on early Mars.

The big picture is that magmatic hydrothermal systems were active during the early formation of Mars' crust 4.45 billion years ago.

It's not clear whether this means surface water was stable at this time, but we think it's possible. What is clear is that the crust of Mars, like Earth, had water shortly after it formed – a necessary ingredient for habitability.

—The Conversation



The Martian river valleys and clay minerals are mainly found in Noachian terrains, which cover about 45 per cent of Mars
PHOTO: AI

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Old is gold: Why Bollywood is turning to re-releases amid string of flops

When Raghav Bikhchandani found out on social media that Gangs of Wasseypur, the acclaimed Indian blockbuster released in 2012, was all set to hit the theatres in New Delhi again, he knew he could not miss it this time and even alerted several film clubs and WhatsApp groups he was part of.

For the 27-year-old copy editor, getting to watch the two-part film felt like "finally being introduced to the most memed movie in Indian pop culture" as he found himself commuting for three hours on an August afternoon to a seedy theatre in the city's Subhash Nagar neighbourhood to catch the movie on the big screen.

"I came into Hindi cinema much later in life, and I had missed out on seeing this on the big screen. When I was studying abroad in Chicago, even NRIs in my university would quote dialogues from this movie but I had never gotten a chance to see it. So I knew I couldn't miss this opportunity," he said.

But it isn't just Gangs of Wasseypur. Bollywood, India's much-vaunted Hindi film industry based in Mumbai, as well as regional film studios spread across the world's most populous nation, are witnessing an unprecedented surge in re-releases of films celebrated in the past, some going as far back as the 1950s.

Dozens of such films have hit theatres in many cities this year – far more than ever before – as the country's nearly USD200 billion film industry looks to revive its fortunes after taking multiple hits in recent years.

In a country like India, which produces more films a year than Hollywood, cinema is essentially a mass medium, most enjoyed in the dark and dreamy confines of a film theatre showing its latest offering on a 70mm screen. But the coronavirus pandemic hurt Indian films – as it did with movies globally. Since 2022, theatres across the world have been struggling to get people back, a crisis compounded by the rise of online streaming and OTT platforms.

India reeled under two deadly Covid-19 waves in 2020 and 2021, forcing the closure of nearly 1,500 to 2,000 theatres – a majority of them single-screen cinemas, which could not stand up to the corporate franchise-driven multiplexes mostly seen in shopping malls mushrooming across the country.

Then there is the rising cost of making a full-length film. Stars, mainly men, are now paid an unprecedented fee, some amounting to nearly half of a film's budget. Moreover, the expense of their entourage – makeup and publicity crew, vanity vans, hotels and travel – puts further financial strain on producers and studios. Recently, prominent producer and director Karan Johar told journalists the star fees in Bollywood were "not in touch with reality".

Many of the films that have returned to theatres were runaway successes the first time around, while others weren't until now
PHOTOS: FB/ INSTAGRAM

To make matters worse, Bollywood in recent years has been witness to a string of flops, with even big multiplex chains such as PVR INOX incurring heavy losses – and therefore forced to be more imaginative in their offerings.

It was against such a backdrop that theatre owners and filmmakers decided to re-release old films. Many of films that have returned to theatres were runaway successes the first time around, while others weren't – until now.

PVR INOX's lead strategist Niharika Bijli was quoted in a report in September this year as saying the chain re-released a whopping 47 films between April and August this year. While the average occupancy for a new release during this period stood at 25 percent, re-releases enjoyed a higher average of 31 percent, according to the reports.

Indian film trade analyst Taran Adarsh agreed, saying the success of Tumbbad, a 113-minute mythological horror initially released in 2018, was proof that the formula of reruns was working.

Tumbbad did not do well when it first came out. But with rising popularity and critical acclaim, the film was re-released in September this year and went on to perform significantly better than the year it hit the big screen. And it's not just Bollywood – or Hindi cinema – that's cashing in on nostalgia for the olden days and their movies. "When it re-released, Tumbbad actually collected over 125 percent more revenue in its opening weekend than it did back in 2018. People will watch things if there is word-of-mouth publicity and theatre owners and distributors are aware of it. Superstars like Shah Rukh Khan and Salman [Khan] are coming back to theatres, thanks to Karan Arjun getting a re-release," said Adarsh, referring to the actors, who, despite being in their late 50s, continue to be the top two reigning stars in Bollywood.

Down south, megastars such as Rajinikanth, Kamal Haasan, Chiranjeevi and Mohanlal also saw their popular hits making a comeback to the screens. Rajinikanth, 73 and Haasan, 70, are two of the most successful actors in Tamil language cinema, enjoying a cult following.

Ira Bhaskar, former professor of cinema studies at New Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru University, said the current phenomenon is only a repackaging of what has long existed.

"Before the era of multiplexes, films were in fact re-screened very often. If there was a Hindi movie coming out of Bombay [now Mumbai], it was quite common to see that film, say a year later in a smaller city or town like Varanasi," Bhaskar told Al Jazeera.

While Adarsh agreed that the current trend is a "continuation of what we used to witness in the 1970s and 1980s", he also pointed to a crucial difference: the influx of online streaming and people switching from 70mm screens to smartphones, forcing theatres to compete with other viewing options.

"The feeling of watching a movie on a big screen is so unique and simply can't be matched. There will always be people who want that."

—Al Jazeera

PHOTO: X

Gunman shot dead near Israeli embassy in Jordan

AMMAN, 24 NOV

A gunman was killed, and three policemen were injured, in a shooting near the Israeli embassy in Jordan's capital early on Sunday, state media reported. The gunman opened fire at a police patrol in the Rabiah neighbourhood in Amman and was shot dead after security forces engaged, said Petra news agency. "The Public Security Directorate announced that it dealt with an incident of gunfire at a patrol operating in the Rabiah area in the capital, Amman, at dawn on Sunday," Petra news agency said. The injured officers are receiving treatment, and investigations are on, the report said, adding that the area was cordoned off by the police, and authorities asked residents to remain indoors, as the incident unfolded. *—PTI*

EU passes regulation on Uyghur forced labour

BELGIUM, 24 NOV

The European Union has passed new regulations prohibiting the sale of products containing forced labor, a move aimed at addressing the exploitation of Uyghurs in Xinjiang. The EU's Forced Labor Regulation, introduced in 2020, prohibits the sale of products or components made with forced labor in all EU member states. The regulation aims to eliminate incentives for companies to profit from forced labor in their supply chains. The EU regulation does not assume all products from Xinjiang are made with forced labour. China acknowledges high-risk regions for forced labor, a step towards monitoring and enforcing regulations, despite international condemnation for its treatment of Uyghurs and other ethnic groups. *—ANI*

Nigeria to ditch petrol vehicles for CNG

ABUJA, 24 NOV

Nigerian authorities have introduced a compressed natural gas (CNG) initiative to tap its huge gas reserves – Africa's largest – and roll out CNG buses. Ever since the project has been taken up in August, more than 100,000 vehicles have been adapted to run on CNG or with the hybrid option of CNG and petrol. The government has invested at least $200 on the initiative, said its director Michael Oluwagbemi. The government aims to convert 1M of Nigeria's over 11M vehicles in the next three years, but analysts say the process has been slow because of poor implementation and limited infrastructure. Although Nigeria is one of Africa's top oil producers, it depends on imported refined petroleum products because its refineries are struggling. *—ANI*

Forecasts warn of winter storms across US

WINDSOR, 24 NOV

Forecasters through the US issued warnings that another round of winter weather could complicate travel leading up to the Thanksgiving holiday, while California and Washington state continue to recover from storm damage and power outages. In California, where a person was found dead in a vehicle submerged in floodwaters on Saturday, authorities braced for more precipitation while grappling with flooding and small landslides. The National Weather Service office in Sacramento, California, issued a winter storm warning for the state's Sierra Nevada for Saturday through Tuesday, with heavy snow expected at higher elevations and wind gusts potentially reaching 88kph. *—PTI*

Israeli strike kills Lebanese soldier, hurts 18

Hezbollah fires rockets into northern and central Israel, wounding at least five people

BEIRUT, 24 NOV

An Israeli strike on a Lebanese army centre on Sunday killed one soldier and wounded 18 others, the Lebanese military said. The Hezbollah militant group meanwhile fired barrages of rockets into northern and central Israel, wounding at least five people.

Israeli strikes have killed over 40 Lebanese troops since the start of the war between Israel and Hezbollah, even as Lebanon's military has largely kept to the sidelines.

There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military, which has said previous strikes on Lebanese troops were accidental and that they are not a target of its campaign against Hezbollah.

Lebanon's caretaker prime minister, Najib Mikati, condemned it as an assault on US-led cease-fire efforts, calling it a "direct, bloody message rejecting all efforts and ongoing contacts" to end the war.

"(Israel is) again writing in Lebanese blood a brazen rejection of the solution that is being discussed," a statement from his office read.

The strike occurred in southwestern Lebanon on the coastal road between Tyre and Naqoura, where there has been heavy fighting between Israel and Hezbollah.

Smoke and flames erupt from a building hit in an Israeli airstrike in Chiyah, in the southern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon *PHOTO: PTI*

Hezbollah fires rockets after strikes on Beirut

Hezbollah began firing rockets, missiles and drones into Israel after Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack out of the Gaza Strip ignited the war there. Hezbollah has portrayed the attacks as an act of solidarity with the Palestinians and Hamas. Iran supports both armed groups.

Israel has launched retaliatory airstrikes since the rocket fire began, and in September the low-level conflict erupted into all-out war, as Israel launched waves of airstrikes across large parts of Lebanon and killed Hezbollah's top leader, Hassan Nasrallah, and several of his top commanders. Israel's Magen David Adom rescue service said it was treating two people in the central city of Petah Tikva, a 23-year-old man who was lightly wounded by a blast and a 70-year-old woman suffering from smoke inhalation from a car that caught fire. The first responders said they treated three other people in northern Israel, including a 60-year-old man. Israeli attacks have killed more than 3,500 people in Lebanon, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry. *—PTI*

Missing rabbi killed in UAE, says Israel

TEL AVIV, 24 NOV

- Iran, which supports Hamas and Hezbollah, has been threatening to retaliate against Israel after Israel carried out in October in response to an Iranian ballistic missile attack

Israel said on Sunday that the body of an Israeli-Moldovan rabbi, who went missing in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), has been found after he was killed in what it described as a "heinous anti-Semitic terror incident."

The statement from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Israel "will act with all means to seek justice with the criminals responsible for his death". There was no immediate comment from the UAE.

Zvi Kogan, an ultra-Orthodox rabbi who went missing on Thursday, ran a Kosher grocery store in Dubai.

Iran, which supports Hamas and Hezbollah, has been threatening to retaliate against Israel after a wave of airstrikes Israel carried out in October in response to an Iranian ballistic missile attack.

Early Sunday, the UAE's state-run WAM news agency acknowledged Kogan's disappearance but pointedly did not acknowledge that he held Israeli citizenship, referring to him only as being Moldovan. The Emirati Interior Ministry described Kogan as being "missing and out of contact."

"Specialised authorities immediately began search and investigation operations upon receiving the report," the Interior Ministry said.

Kogan was an emissary of the Chabad Lubavitch movement, a prominent and highly observant branch of ultra-Orthodox Judaism based in Brooklyn's Crown Heights neighbourhood in New York City. It is said he was last seen in Dubai.

The UAE has a burgeoning Jewish community, with synagogues and businesses catering to kosher diners. *—PTI*

The air defence forces shot down more than a dozen drones targeting Kyiv on Sunday *PHOTO: UKRAINE'S SOUTHERN OPERATIONAL COMMAND*

Ukraine downs 50 of 73 Russian drones in overnight attack

KYIV, 24 NOV

- Ukraine's military intelligence agency reported that Russian forces are using cheap decoy drones with foreign components to overload Ukraine's air defense systems

Russia reportedly targeted Ukraine with Shahed drones and an unspecified type of drone launched from the Russian oblasts of Oryol and Bryansk.

The drones were downed over Kyiv, Cherkasy, Kirovohrad, Chernihiv, Sumy, Poltava, and Zhytomyr oblasts, according to the Air Force. There have been no reports of casualties or damage.

As of 9am local time, four Russian drones remained in Ukrainian airspace, with combat operations ongoing.

Kyiv authorities reported in the morning that air defense forces shot down more than a dozen drones targeting the capital.

"Preliminary reports indicate no damage in the capital, and no information about casualties has been received," the Kyiv City Military Administration wrote on Telegram.

On 17 November, Russian forces launched one of the heaviest aerial strikes of the full-scale war, primarily targeting the energy grid. Ukrainian air defenses shot down 102 of the 120 missiles and 42 of the 90 drones launched overnight.

Ukraine's military intelligence agency (HUR), reported on 18 November that Russian forces are using cheap decoy drones with foreign components to overload Ukraine's air defense systems.

According to HUR, Russian manufacturers produce the Gerbera drone — a cheaper and less deadly equivalent of Iran's Shahed — at a plant in Yelabuga, in the Republic of Tatarstan, central Russia. These drones are reportedly made with components from the United States, China, the Netherlands, and Switzerland.

—Kyiv Independent

Pak locks down capital to block Imran's rally

ISLAMABAD, 24 NOV

Stringent mea¬sures were put in place by the Pakistan government to thwart Sunday's the protest march by jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's party towards Islamabad.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, led by former Prime Minister Imran Khan, had called on the public to join the march to "break the shackles of slavery."

The federal government took several steps to block the protest, including deploying heavy security forces, sealing key roads and setting up barriers around the capital.

The Interior Ministry emphasised that in accordance with court orders, no protests or sit-ins would be allowed in Islamabad, and any attempts to disrupt public order will be met with legal action.

Khan, in a statement, urged the masses to unite for the protest, calling it a movement for freedom and justice.

The PTI leaders earlier on Sunday held a high-level meeting at the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister's House to finalise the strategy for the planned protest, Geo News reported.

Paramilitary soldiers stand guard at a road barricaded with shipping containers ahead of a rally by supporters of imprisoned former Prime Minister Imran Khan's PTI, in Islamabad, Pakistan, on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur said he would arrive in Swabi at 3pm to oversee the preparations for the planned protest and lead the party's march to Islamabad, the report added.

Ignoring calls by the government to postpone the protest, the PTI had declared to go ahead the march to Islamabad coinciding with the arrival of a large Belarusian delegation even as the authorities issued a warning of a potential threat during the protest. *—PTI*

Japan holds Sado mines memorial amid S Korea row

SADO, 24 NOV

Japan held a memorial ceremony on Sunday near the Sado Island Gold Mines despite a last-minute boycott of the event by South Korea that highlighted tensions between the neighbors over the issue of Korean forced laborers at the site before and during World War II.

South Korea's absence at Sunday's memorial, to which Seoul government officials and Korean victims' families were invited, is a major setback in the rapidly improving ties between the two countries.

On Saturday, South Korea announced it would not attend the event, saying it was impossible to settle unspecified disagreements between the two governments in time. *—PTI*

Jay Bhattacharya, is Trump's new pick to lead US health agency

WASHINGTON DC, 24 NOV

Physician and Standford Professor of Health Policy Jay Bhattacharya, is likely to be chosen by President-elect Donald Trump as the next director of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) of the United States, according to a report by The Washington Post.

Bhattacharya, a Professor of Health Policy at Stanford University and a research associate at the National Bureau of Economics Research, has met with President Robert F. Kennedy Jr. to discuss his vision for reforming the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Bhattacharya outlines a vision for reforming the NIH, calling for a significant shift in the agency's priorities. He advocates for increasing funding for innovative research and decreasing the influence of long-tenured career officials. Bhattacharya's research focuses on the health and well-being of vulnerable populations, with a particular emphasis on the role of government programs, biomedical innovation, and economics.

Jay Bhattacharya *PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA*

Bhattacharya, an economics expert with a PhD from Stanford University, has published 135 peer-reviewed articles on Covid-19 epidemiology and policy response evaluation. *—ANI*

Musk mocks US' electoral process

Billionaire businessman Elon Musk took a swipe at the US' electoral process with California yet to officially announce results of the presidential polls, more than two weeks after it was held, and drew a contrast with India. Musk praised India highlighting that it was able to count 640 million votes in just one day. *—ANI*

Bangladesh Chief Election Commissioner (centre) during the oath taking ceremony on Sunday at Dhaka, Bangladesh *PHOTO: DHAKATRIBUNE*

New Election Commission sworn in Bangladesh

DHAKA, 24 NOV

Bangladesh's newly appointed Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin and four other commissioners were sworn in on Sunday nearly three months after the resignation of the previous commission as deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina's regime was toppled in a student-led mass upsurge.

Chief Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed administered the oath to the new commission at the Supreme Court Judges' Lounge at a ceremony joined by the top court judges and concerned officials. The new chief election commissioner is a retired secretary. The four election commissioners are retired district judges Mohammad Anwarul Islam Sarker and Abdur Rahmanel Masud, retired joint secretary to the government Begum Tahmida Ahmed and retired army brigadier general Abul Fazal Md Sanaullah.

President Shahabuddin appointed the new commission on 21 November. *—PTI*

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN FOCUS

80,000 hit Paris streets against sexual violence

PARIS, 24 NOV

In Paris, large crowds of women and men on Saturday marched waving purple placards that denounced gender-based violence and defended women's reproductive rights. The protests came two days before the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

The demonstrators voiced concerns about a possible rollback on women's rights in the US when President-elect Donald Trump returns to the White House in January. Vice President-elect JD Vance said he would like a national abortion ban in a podcast interview in 2022, but has since emphasised that individual states should determine their policies.

French newspaper Le Monde reported that roughly 80,000 protesters hit Paris streets, with 400 different organisations taking part in demonstrations. It said thousands of people also took to the streets in smaller cities across the nation, including 1,500 in Renne outside Lyon in the southeastern part of France.

People march against violence against women two days before the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women in Paris *PHOTO: ANADOLU*

France enshrined abortion rights in the constitution in March – a move largely seen as a response to the US move to roll back key reproductive rights protections in 2022 when the Supreme Court overturned decades-old laws protecting abortion rights nationally.

While abortion has been legal since 1975 in France, the constitutional change explicitly guaranteed abortion access. France was the first country in the world to do so.

Protesters also voiced solidarity with Gisele Pelicot, whose ex-husband Dominique Pelicot and 50 others are on trial for allegedly drugging and raping her for over a decade.

"Unfortunately, anybody can be a perpetrator of violence. It can be our brothers. It can be our fathers. It can be our colleagues. It can be our bosses. I think that's the big shock for people," said Maelle Noir, an activist from feminist collective Nous Toutes. *—PTI*

Patanjali Ayurved's FY24 revenue up 23% to ₹9,335.3 cr

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

Baba Ramdev-led Patanjali Ayurved's total income has risen by 23.15 per cent to Rs 9,335.32 crore in 2023-24, helped by other income which includes OFS of Patanjali Foods (earlier known as Ruchi Soya) and income from other group entities, according to RoC filing by the company. In FY24 Patanjali Ayurved's other income was at Rs 2,875.29 crore against Rs 46.18 crore in the year-ago period, according to financial data accessed through business intelligence platform Tofler. It reported a five-fold jump in its total profit to Rs 2,901.10 crore in FY24. The total income of Patanjali's Ayurved, a non-listed entity, which includes other income as well was at Rs 7,580.06 crore in FY23 —*PTI*

PNB: Pension verification shifts to digital for ease

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

The introduction of digital life certificates (DLCs) for pensioners has been hailed as a "game changer" in the pension verification process, according to Sanjay Varshneya, Chief General Manager of Punjab National Bank (PNB). Over the first 20 days of a dedicated campaign this month, the bank processed 215,000 DLCs, significantly simplifying the annual submission process for pensioners. Varshneya noted that this initiative, part of the Aadhaar-based Jeevan Pramaan scheme launched in 2014, offers convenience and efficiency, allowing pensioners to submit their life certificates from the comfort of their own homes and alleviating the strain of unnecessary office visits. To bolster its outreach, PNB is organising mega camps in cities such as Delhi, Gurugram, and Chandigarh, while providing free doorstep banking services for pensioners. —*PTI*

Goenka withdraws onset for ZEEL MD reappointment

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

IPunit Goenka, CEO of Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL), has resigned from his position as Managing Director and withdrawn his consent for reappointment at the upcoming Annual General Meeting (AGM), as per an exchange filing. ZEEL disclosed Goenka's resignation letter on Saturday, stating he would no longer seek reappointment as proposed in the AGM notice. Previously, on 18 October, 2024, the ZEEL board had approved plans for Goenka's reappointment for a five-year term, starting 1 January, 2025. His current tenure was set to end at the close of 2024. The shareholders' approval was required during the AGM scheduled for 28 November. Goenka, the son of media tycoon Subhash Chandra, had faced performance targets. —*PTI*

Hero MotoCorp & Zero manufactures electric bikes

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

Hero MotoCorp, in collaboration with US-based Zero Motorcycles, is progressing towards the launch of a mid-sized performance electric motorcycle. CEO Niranjan Gupta revealed during an analyst call that the development is in its advanced stages, though no launch timeline has been announced. The partnership follows Hero's investment of up to USD 60 million in Zero Motorcycles, a leader in electric motorcycle technology. Additionally, the company plans to expand its electric scooter range to cover various price segments, aiming to launch new models within six months. Hero's existing VIDA electric scooters are priced between Rs 1-1.5 lakh and are available in over 230 cities across India. On an international front, the company is experiencing growth in markets like Colombia and Mexico, while also focusing on expanding its presence in key countries. Gupta expressed optimism about the overall economic outlook. —*PTI*

FPI selling hits ₹26,533 cr, outflow intensity eases

FPIs withdrew ₹1,110 cr from general limit, invested R872 cr

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

Data reveals FPIs recorded a net outflow of Rs 26,533 crore until 22 November *PHOTO: PTI*

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have withdrawn Rs 26,533 crore from the Indian equity market so far in November, primarily due to increasing investment allocations to China, concerns over subdued corporate earnings, and high domestic stock valuations. This sell-off, while significant, marks a reduction in outflows compared to October, when FPIs pulled out a staggering Rs 94,017 crore, the highest recorded monthly outflow.

According to Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director at Morningstar Investment Research India, future FPI flows will hinge on various factors, including policies under Donald Trump, current inflation and interest rates, geopolitical developments, and the performance of Indian companies in the third quarter. FPIs experienced a substantial outflow of Rs 19,940 crore in 2024.

Data reveals FPIs recorded a net outflow of Rs 26,533 crore until 22 November, following a high of Rs 57,724 crore in September, which was the highest investment in nine months. Elevated Indian equity valuations have driven investors to seek more appealing opportunities elsewhere, particularly in China, which has recently introduced stimulus measures to boost its ailing economy.

Additionally, concerns over India's lacklustre corporate earnings and persistent inflation have heightened worries about potential delays in domestic interest rate reductions. V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, noted investor apprehensions regarding FY25 earnings while suggesting that the trend of "Sell India, Buy China" has waned.

In the debt market, FPIs withdrew Rs 1,110 crore from the general limit but invested Rs 872 crore in the Voluntary Retention Route, totalling Rs 1.05 lakh crore in debt market investments for the year thus far. —*PTI*

AMID ONGOING DECLINE

India's forex reserves drop to 4-month low

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

PHOTO: PTI

India's foreign exchange (forex) reserves have fallen for the seventh consecutive week, reaching an over four-month low of USD 657.892 billion as of 15 November, according to data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). The reserves decreased by approximately USD 17.761 billion during the reporting week, continuing a downward trend that began after hitting a record high of USD 704.89 billion in September.

The decline in reserves is primarily attributed to the RBI's interventions aimed at curbing sharp depreciation of the Indian Rupee. As per the latest figures, India's foreign currency assets (FCA), the largest component of the reserves, stand at USD 569.835 billion, while gold reserves total USD 65.746 billion.

Current estimates indicate that India's forex reserves are sufficient to cover roughly one year of projected imports. In 2023, the country added approximately USD 58 billion to its reserves, contrasting sharply with a cumulative decline of USD 71 billion in 2022.

The RBI closely monitors foreign exchange markets and intervenes as necessary to maintain market stability and curb excessive volatility in the Rupee exchange rate. Over the past decade, the Indian Rupee has evolved from one of Asia's most volatile currencies to one of the more stable, enhancing the attractiveness of Indian assets for foreign investors. —*ANI*

A CONCERN

Reliance faces challenges amid mixed market trends

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

Reliance operates through 3 main business segments *PHOTO: PTI*

- Since peaking on 8 July, Reliance's stock has plummeted 22 per cent

Reliance Industries Ltd has experienced notable underperformance recently, attributed to two primary factors, as outlined in a report by JP Morgan. While one issue—weak refining margins—has shown signs of recovery, the other—disappointing top-line growth in its retail sector—remains a concern.

Since peaking on 8 July, Reliance's stock has plummeted 22 per cent, starkly contrasting with the NIFTY index's 3.3 per cent decline during the same period. Despite this dip, the company's fair valuations appear attractive in a market where most stocks are trading above historical averages.

Reliance, led by billionaire Mukesh Ambani, operates through three main business segments: oil refining and petrochemicals, telecom under Jio, and retail, alongside its media and new energy ventures. The retail and telecom units now contribute around 50 per cent of the company's consolidated EBITDA for FY24, with expectations they will drive nearly all net EBITDA growth in the next three years.

While refining margins have recently improved, the outlook for Reliance Retail remains uncertain, with ongoing concerns surrounding a retail slowdown and company restructuring. JP Morgan also pointed out that potential changes in consumer demand might influence Reliance's solar initiatives, which are set to announce new capacities by March.

The brokerage has revised its retail forecasts, reducing FY25-26 EBITDA estimates by 10-15 per cent, although this adjustment will minimally impact Reliance's overall PAT forecasts. The anticipated listings of Jio and Retail may face delays due to current market conditions. —*PTI*

HDFC Bank led the gains among the top firms *PHOTO: PTI*

Mcap soars by ₹1.55L cr, HDFC Bank & TCS Shine

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

- During the week, the BSE benchmark surged by 1,536.8 points, or 1.98 per cent, while the NSE Nifty increased by 374.55 points

Eight of India's ten most valued companies collectively added Rs 1,55,603.45 crore to their market valuations last week, buoyed by a robust performance in equities. HDFC Bank and Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) emerged as the biggest gainers in this uptrend.

During the week, the BSE benchmark surged by 1,536.8 points, or 1.98 per cent, while the NSE Nifty increased by 374.55 points, or 1.59 per cent . On Friday, the Sensex closed at 79,117.11 after gaining 1,961.32 points (2.54per cent), and the Nifty ended at 23,907.25, up by 557.35 points (2.39 per cent).

HDFC Bank led the gains among the top firms, with its market valuation increasing by Rs 40,392.91 crore to Rs 13,34,418.14 crore. Following closely, TCS added Rs 36,036.15 crore, raising its valuation to Rs 15,36,149.51 crore. ICICI Bank and Infosys also saw significant increases in their valuations, rising by Rs 16,266.54 crore and Rs 16,189.33 crore, respectively.

Other notable gainers included Hindustan Unilever, with a market cap increase of Rs 13,239.95 crore, and ITC, which added Rs 11,508.91 crore. Bharti Airtel and State Bank of India also recorded gains of Rs 11,260.11 crore and Rs 10,709.55 crore, respectively.

In contrast, Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) saw a decline in its valuation, decreasing by Rs 11,954.24 crore to Rs 5,62,545.30 crore, and Reliance Industries' market cap dipped Rs 2,368.16 crore to Rs.17,13,130.75 crore, making it the most valued domestic firm, followed by TCS and HDFC Bank —*ANI*

This week, mkt will recover after bypoll results

MUMBAI, 24 NOV

Analysts predict that global factors and foreign institutional investor (FII) activities will significantly influence trends in India's equity markets this week. The outcomes of the Maharashtra and Jharkhand assembly elections are expected to have a substantial impact on stocks, particularly following a robust recovery in the markets on Friday.

The benchmark Sensex surged by 1,961.32 points (2.54 per cent) to close at 79,117.11, while the Nifty climbed 557.35 points (2.39 per cent) to settle at 23,907.25, marking the best single-day gains in over five months. "The election results in Maharashtra, where the NDA achieved a landslide victory, could further boost bullish sentiment," noted Santosh Meena, Head of Research at Swastika Investmart Ltd.

However, global uncertainties, including rising crude oil prices and escalating tensions between Russia and Ukraine, heighten inflationary pressures. Analysts also emphasised the role of the US dollar's strength and elevated US bond yields, affecting FII flows.

With key global economic data on the horizon, including US GDP growth rates, investor sentiment remains cautious. Broader indices also experienced gains last week, driven by realty, auto, and FMCG sectors. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Choose correct ITR for foreign assets: CBDT

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

As many as two lakh Income Tax Returns (ITRs) containing details of foreign assets and income have been filed during the current assessment year till now, according to the tax department which urged Indian residents for tax purposes to ensure they file the right form and revise their returns if they submitted the wrong form.

The shares obtained and income earned by resident tax Indians from their employers through employee stock options should also be disclosed to the Income-Tax Department by filling foreign assets and foreign source income schedule provided in the relevant ITR, a senior CBDT officer explained.

The tax department and its administrative authority Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) recently launched a campaign to ensure that the select category of taxpayers (Indian residents for tax purposes) report their foreign assets (FA) and foreign source income (FSI) during the 2024-25 assessment year by the deadline of 31 December.

The department conducted a 'Samvaad' online interaction session on the subject of 'property disclosure of foreign assets and income by taxpayers' where the Commissioner (investigation) in the CBDT Shashi Bhushan Shukla explained various provisions of the subject and relevant linked provisions of the anti-black money Act of 2015.

India has signed the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAAs) for the said purpose with various countries. Apart from these, he said, agreements and mutual exchange treaties like CRS (common reporting standard) with 123 countries and FATCA (foreign account tax compliance) with the US have been signed through which Indian tax authorities annually get information about the foreign assets and income of Indians based abroad. —*PTI*

National consumer helpline unveils AI-driven services

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

National Consumer Helpline (NCH) is set to introduce artificial intelligence-based features including speech recognition and multilingual chatbots as part of a major upgrade to its consumer grievance system.

The helpline has also announced partnerships with over 1,000 companies to expedite complaint resolution.

The new AI capabilities, dubbed NCH 2.0, will allow consumers to file complaints through voice input in their local languages, marking a significant technological transformation of the consumer protection platform that currently operates in 17 languages. —*PTI*

Robust IPO pipeline: 10 firms target ₹ 20,000 cr in Dec

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

The Indian primary market is projected to thrive in December, with at least ten companies, including supermarket giant Vishal Mega Mart and Blackstone-owned International Gemmological Institute (India) Ltd, poised to raise a combined Rs 20,000 crore through initial public offerings (IPOs), according to merchant bankers.In addition to these two major players, education-focused NBFC Avanse Financial Services, TPG Capital-supported Sai Life Sciences, and hospital chain Paras Healthcare are also preparing to launch their IPOs. This diverse array of offerings will incorporate various sectors, deal sizes, and combine fresh issues with offers for sale (OFS).Trivesh D, COO of Tradejini, noted that positive market sentiment fuelled by recent election results may enhance IPO activity. While 2024 has been a promising year for IPOs, some recent issues have faced challenges in the secondary market. —*PTI*

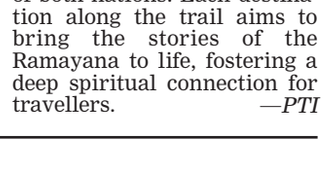


PHOTO: PTI

TO ENHANCE TOURISM

SL airlines launches Ramayana trail package

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

Currently, SriLankan Airlines operates 88 flights weekly to nine Indian destinations *PHOTO: X*

SriLankan Airlines plans to ramp up its flight operations to India, capitalising on the "enormous growth" potential in tourism from the country. Richard Nuttall, CEO of SriLankan Airlines, highlighted the airline's strategy during the launch of the Ramayana Trail package in New Delhi. This unique offering aims to connect visitors with 20 significant locations in Sri Lanka related to the ancient Indian epic, the Ramayana.

Nuttall noted that while the influx of Indian tourists has been impressive this year, numbers have yet to reach pre-Covid levels. Up until the end of October, approximately 20 per cent of tourists arriving in Sri Lanka were from India. "We are focused on rejuvenating tourism from India to the next level," he commented, indicating a shift towards more innovative travel experiences.

Currently, SriLankan Airlines operates 88 flights weekly to nine Indian destinations, including Delhi, Mumbai, and Bengaluru. Nuttall expressed the airline's intention to increase flight frequencies and introduce more convenient schedules, with plans to add additional destinations in the future.

Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to India, Kshenuka Senewiratne, emphasised that the Ramayana serves not just as a narrative but as a cultural tapestry that strengthens the ties between India and Sri Lanka.

The Ramayana Trail promises visitors an opportunity to explore vital sites, such as the Seetha Amman Temple, while celebrating the rich heritage of both nations. Each destination along the trail aims to bring the stories of the Ramayana to life, fostering a deep spiritual connection for travellers. —*PTI*

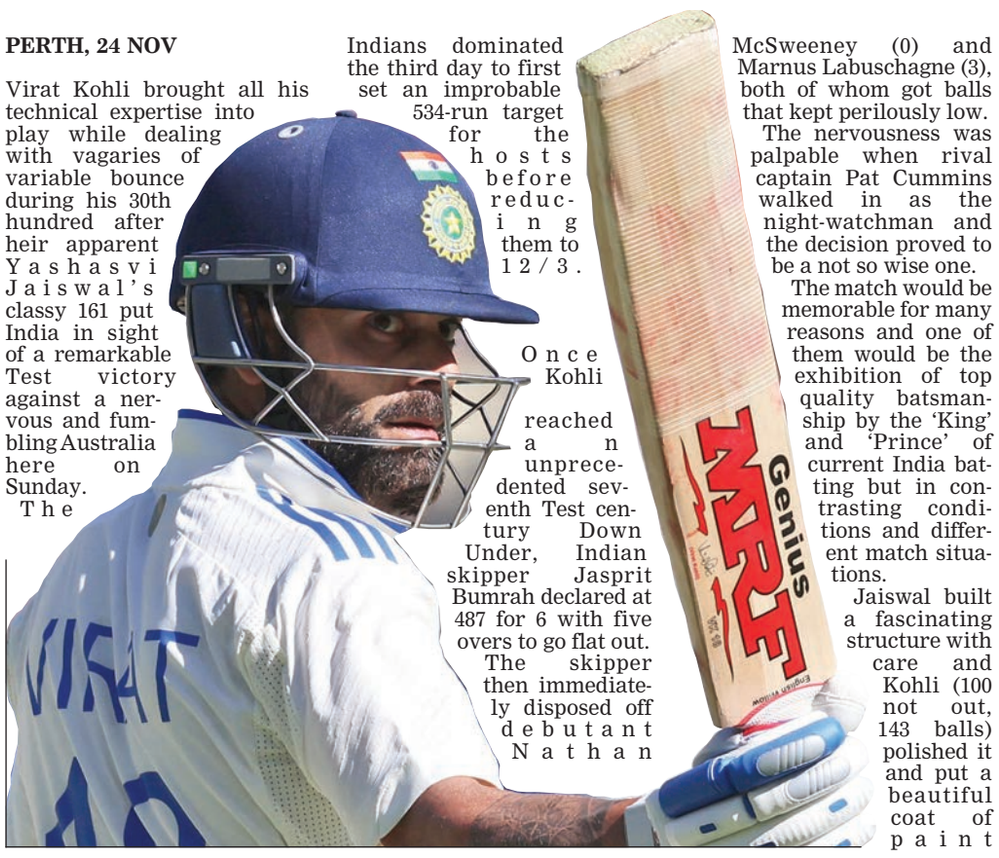
‘King & Prince’: Tons by Kohli, Jaiswal propel India

In Border Gavaskar Trophy Test against Aus, India set 534-run target before reducing them to 12/3

PERTH, 24 NOV

Virat Kohli brought all his technical expertise into play while dealing with vagaries of variable bounce during his 30th hundred after heir apparent Yashasvi Jaiswal’s classy 161 put India in sight of a remarkable Test victory against a nervous and fumbling Australia here on Sunday.

The Indians dominated the third day to first set an improbable 534-run target for the hosts before reducing them to 12/3.



Once Kohli reached an unprecedented seventh Test century Down Under, Indian skipper Jasprit Bumrah declared at 487 for 6 with five overs to go flat out.

The skipper then immediately disposed off debutant Nathan McSweeney (0) and Marnus Labuschagne (3), both of whom got balls that kept perilously low.

The nervousness was palpable when rival captain Pat Cummins walked in as the night-watchman and the decision proved to be a not so wise one.

The match would be memorable for many reasons and one of them would be the exhibition of top quality batsmanship by the ‘King’ and ‘Prince’ of current India batting but in contrasting conditions and different match situations.

Jaiswal built a fascinating structure with care and Kohli (100 not out, 143 balls) polished it and put a beautiful coat of paint while throwing caution to the wind while reaching the landmark.

The 22-year-old Jaiswal, on Sunday, emerged as the unofficial flag-bearer of Indian batting for the next decade and a half during his 297-ball stay at the wicket, giving a glimpse of his ever-improving technique and composed temperament.

But it was veteran Kohli, who showed how to play on a wicket that consistently misbehaved during his second hundred at the Perth Stadium and 30th overall, which incidentally took him past Sir Don Bradman’s 29 Test tons. *—PTI*

> **Virat Kohli doesn’t have anything to prove, his contribution is unparalleled**
>
> -Kapil Dev

> **I just wanted to contribute to team”s cause: Kohli after scoring 30th Test hundred**
>
> -Virat Kohli

Jaiswal gestures as he leaves the field after losing his wicket on the third day **PHOTO: PTI**

Kapil Dev praises Bumrah for leading team from front

Legendary Kapil Dev **PHOTO: PTI**

Legendary Kapil Dev on Sunday praised Jasprit Bumrah for leading India’s fight from the front in the ongoing Perth Test against Australia, and said the visitors have so far performed beyond expectations.

Bumrah, the stand-in captain for the Perth Test, led the team’s charge towards a vital 46-run lead in the first innings returning 5 for 30, as Australia were bowled out for a mere 104. Bumrah’s 11th five-for in Test cricket was also his seventh in SENA (South Africa, England, New Zealand and Australia), which put him at par with Kapil for most five-wicket hauls in these nations. “Special congratulations must be given to Bumrah because it is very rare that bowlers are chosen as captains and it feels very good to see him lead the way he has done,” Kapil told the media here during the Vishwa Samudra Golden Eagle Golf Championship. Kapil lauded Bumrah for bringing fast bowling back into the discussions in the country. “I need not say anything — his records show (how good he is). He is the top bowler in the world, what else do we need?” he said. *—PTI*

Sultanov crushes Bobrov to bag ITF Kalaburagi Open

KALABURAGI, 24 NOV

Dominant Khumoyun Sultanov outplayed Bogdan Bobrov of Russia in a lopsided final to clinch the ITF Kalaburagi Open here on Sunday. Top-seeded Sultanov ran the Russian ragged en route to a 6-2, 6-1 victory in exactly an hour. This was the Uzbekistan player’s fifth title of the season and the second in India. He won in Chandigarh earlier in the year. Once Sultanov broke an error-prone Bobrov in the sixth game of the opening set, the final fizzled into a no-contest. The second-seeded Bobrov, winner of the doubles title on Saturday, struggled with his movement on the court. Playing both doubles and singles in the hot sun the entire week probably took a toll on the 27-year-old. “This win was important for me as I was defending points,” said Sultanov, who took home a cheque for $3,600 and earned 25 ATP ranking points. *—PTI*

Racing clinch Copa Sudamericana title for the first time

ASUNCION, 24 NOV

Gaston Martirena and Adrian Martinez scored first-half goals as Argentina’s Racing won its first Copa Sudamericana championship by beating Brazil’s Cruzeiro 3-1 in the final. Martirena opened the scoring in the 15th minute and Martinez added a goal five minutes later to give “La Academia” its first international title since 1988 when it won the now defunct Supercopa Sudamericana. Kaio Jorge scored in the 52nd for Cruzeiro. Racing, a team based in the city of Avellaneda, took the lead when Martirena,, sent in what appeared to be a cross from the right but the looping ball went over goalkeeper Cassio and into the far corner of the net. *—PTI*

Murray to coach Djokovic, debut set for Australian Open

NEW DELHI, 24 NOV

Tennis ace Novak Djokovic has announced that his former arch-rival Andy Murray will coach him from now on. The first tournament in which they will be seen together would be the Australian Open which will take place in January next year (2025). The 37-year-old is the only remaining member of the ‘Big Four’ after Rafael Nadal retired this week and Roger Federer hung up his racket in 2022. He has 24 Grand Slam singles titles, but this year is the first since 2017 that he has failed to increase his tally. After splitting with Goran Ivanisevic, Djokovic turned to three-time Slam winner and double Olympic champion Murray in his bid for Slam title number 25. *—ANI*

EYES ON $2.5M CASH PRIZE

Battle of GMs: Gukesh faces Liren in C’ship showdown

SINGAPORE, 24 NOV

The weight of expectations sits lightly on his teenaged shoulders and Grandmaster D Gukesh would bank heavily on his calm mind when he takes on Chinese Ding Liren in the World Championship showdown beginning here on Monday, aiming to become the first Indian after Viswanathan Anand to win the coveted title.

The majority of the chess world is rooting for the 18-year-old in-form Indian, who already displays the poise of a champion. What remains to be seen is how he handles the pressure of the big occasion during the fortnight-long showpiece.

If the first press conference held on Saturday afternoon was any indication, both players have immense respect for each other and yet, both are determined to give their best.

Liren had won a match of fluctuating fortunes against Ian Nepomniachtchi of Russia in 2023 to be crowned the world champion but since then, the Chinese has suffered from mental health issues and competed very less compared to Gukesh in the last one year.

“My job is pretty clear -- just go into every game as the best version of myself and play the best moves in the position. If I do that, if I keep playing good chess and stay in the right spirits, even with his recent form dip or even at his best, I don’t think it really matters,” Gukesh said on Saturday.

> **It won’t be a “surprise” if Indian players remain in the contention for at least next decade and a half**
>
> -Peter vidler

D Gukesh **PHOTO: PTI**

“If I do the right things, I’m confident I have all the chances in the world,” he asserted.

This year’s tournament marks the first time in 138 years that two Asian players will be pitted against each other in the marquee clash, that is offering a prize fund of USD 2.5 million. *—PTI*

Greaves hits 1st century, WI lead B’desh by 410 runs

NORTH SOUND, 24 NOV

Justin Greaves scored a patient maiden century in only his third test before West Indies declared at 450-9 on the second day of the first test against Bangladesh.

Greaves, who finished 115 not out, had a previous highest score in tests of 33 and only one century in 43 first-class matches before compiling a composed hundred from 181 balls, batting at No. 6.

He completed the first century of West Indies’ innings after Mikyle Louis was out for 97 and Alick Athanaze for 90.

Bangladesh was 40-2 at stumps, trailing by 410 runs when bad light stopped play with seven overs left in the day. Shahadat Hossain was 10 not out and Mominul Haque on 7. West Indies resumed Saturday at 250-5 after being sent in when Bangladesh won the toss. They were 261-7, the match closely balanced. *—PTI*

LAS VEGAS GRAND PRIX

Verstappen secures 4th F1 title as Mercedes dominates Vegas

LAS VEGAS, 24 NOV

Max Verstappen cruised to a fourth consecutive Formula 1 championship by finishing fifth in the Las Vegas Grand Prix.

Verstappen needed only to finish ahead of Lando Norris of McLaren to give Red Bull a fourth straight driver championship.

The Dutchman started fifth but was already up to second by the 10th lap around the street circuit that includes the famed Las Vegas Strip on Saturday night.

Norris, who had to score at least three points more than Verstappen to extend the championship fight, finished sixth. Verstappen needed only to finish higher than Norris to win the title, which he did with two races remaining on the season.

Verstappen, only the sixth driver in F1 history to win at least four titles, sounded unusually emotional on the radio.

“Oh My God, what a season. Four times. Thank you, thank you guys,” he said. “We gave it all.”

The race was won, meanwhile, by George Russell who was followed by Lewis Hamilton in the first 1-2 sweep for the Mercedes drivers since 2022. Hamilton came from 10th on the grid — two weeks after a demoralizing race in Brazil — to capture his podium finish.

The duo crossed the finish line under a checkered flag waved by actor Sylvester Stallone.

Verstappen, meanwhile, made easy work of Norris after a season where the McLaren driver pushed him harder than he’d been challenged since Verstappen’s 2021 first title. *—PTI*

Sinner & Berrettini power Italy to Davis Cup Final

MALAGA, 24 NOV

Top-ranked Jannik Sinner and Matteo Berrettini won matches in front of a supportive crowd to lift defending champion Italy past Australia 2-0 and back into the Davis Cup final.

Sinner extended his tour-level winning streak to 24 singles sets in a row by beating No. 9 Alex de Minaur 6-3, 6-4 after Berrettini came back to defeat Thanasi Kokkinakis 6-7 (6), 6-3, 7-5.

“If we don’t win, it’s still an amazing achievement (to be) playing (in a) final again,” Sinner said. “We have shown that it was not lucky last year.”

Sinner improved to 9-0 against di Minaur over their careers, including taking the last 17 sets they have played against each other.

Italy will meet first-time finalist Netherlands on Sunday for the title.

The much shorter trip for Italian fans than Australians meant the 9,200-seat arena sounded like a home environment Saturday for Berrettini, with repeated chants of “I-talia!” or “Ole, ole, ole, ole! Matte’! Matte’!” amplified by megaphones and accompanied by drums and trumpets. Chair umpire James Keothavong repeatedly asked spectators to stop whistling as Kokkinakis was serving. *—PTI*

Højbjerg seals Marseille’s 3-1 win at Lens after VAR Review

LENS, 24 NOV

Pierre-Emile Højbjerg scored after VAR came to the rescue for Marseille to beat Lens 3-1 in the French league.

The Denmark midfielder struck in the 89th minute with a free kick awarded when Rémy Labeau-Lascary had what would have been a late equalizer ruled out for a foul by Angelo Fulgini in buildup.

The decision prompted a chorus of whistles from the home fans, who were further riled to see former Lens player Elye Wahi go on for visitors.

Valentin Rongier fired Marseille ahead early in the second half, set up by Neal Maupay, who had been played into the danger area by a good ball from Mason Greenwood. Brazilian forward Luis Henrique made it 2-0 on a counterattack in the 57th.

Højbjerg **PHOTO: PTI**

10-man Barcelona concedes two late goals in draw at Celta Vigo

Celta Vigo gave 10-man Barcelona a shock by scoring two late goals and snatching a 2-2 draw at home in the Spanish league.

Barcelona was minutes away from a win to pad its league lead after Raphinha and Lewandowski had put Barcelona ahead.

Celta poured forward at Balaidos Stadium and Hugo Álvarez rifled in the 86th-minute equalizer with Barcelona unable to mark the extra man.

Barcelona coach Hansi Flick, however, said that he saw it coming since his team had never been able to establish its passing game and was making mistakes when up 2-0. *—PTI*

Ronaldo’s Al-Nassr eyes Asian glory in Saudi League

DUBAI, 24 NOV

Cristiano Ronaldo’s hopes of winning a first major trophy since arriving in Saudi Arabia in 2022 were given an unlikely domestic lifeline on Saturday and, on Monday, the Portuguese star can help Al-Nassr stay on course for a first Asian title. Ronaldo scored his seventh goal of the season against Al-Qadsia on Friday in a battle against Spanish defender Nacho but his former Real Madrid teammate was a different and difficult game against and I had the best part of my career playing with him but here we have a different experience and are playing for different teams. It was an honor to play against him.” Al-Nassr looked to be slipping out of the Saudi Pro League (SPL) title race. Al-Hilal, unbeaten in 46 league games, would have gone nine points clear on Saturday with a win against Al-Khaleej but despite leading 2-0, Hilal fell to a shock 3-2 defeat, a first since May 2023. Australia’s sole representative Central Coast Mariners is also in need of victory as it has just one point. *—PTI*

was celebrating at the final whistle. “It Ronaldo,” Nacho said. “He is my friend

Cristiano Ronaldo **PHOTO: X**

IPL AUCTIONS

Pant surpasses Iyer to become costliest at ₹27 crore

Rishabh Pant **PHOTO: PTI**

JEDDAH, 24 NOV

Rishabh Pant became the most expensive player in the history of IPL as Lucknow Super Giants splurged a humongous Rs 27 crore to buy the flamboyant India keeper-batter in the tournament’s mega auction here on Sunday.

The amount LSG spent for Pant ensured Shreyas Iyer’s record of being the tournament’s costliest player lasted barely a few minutes after Punjab Kings broke the bank to buy the India batter for Rs 26.75 crore.

Moments before Pant emerged as the most expensive player, Iyer surpassed the record held by Australian pacer Mitchell Starc, who was bought by Kolkata Knight Riders for Rs 24.75 crore in the last auction.

Pant went to LSG after his former franchise Delhi Capitals did not use the Right to Match card to buy him back. Starc got a much lower price this time and was sold to Delhi Capitals for Rs 11.75 crore, while England’s Jos Buttler went to Gujarat Titans for Rs 15.75 crore. Among others, left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh’s consistency earned him a massive bid of Rs 18 crore, also from Punjab Kings via the Right to Match card, while South African speedster Kagiso Rabada was bought for Rs 10.75 crore by Gujarat Titans.

Iyer, the former Kolkata Knight Riders captain, started with a base price of Rs two crore. Delhi Capitals had the bid at Rs 26 crore for him but PBKS raised the amount to get the player. Chennai Super Kings started with the first bid for Arshdeep, whose base price was also Rs two crore.

Eventually, after an intense bidding war, the seamer was bought back by Punjab, who exercised the right to match option to complete the deal, having released him earlier.

This is the second time an IPL auction is being held outside the country. *—PTI*